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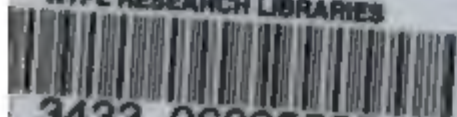
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SELECT
PRACTICAL WRITINGS
OF
RICHARD BAXTER,
WITH A
LIFE OF THE AUTHOR.

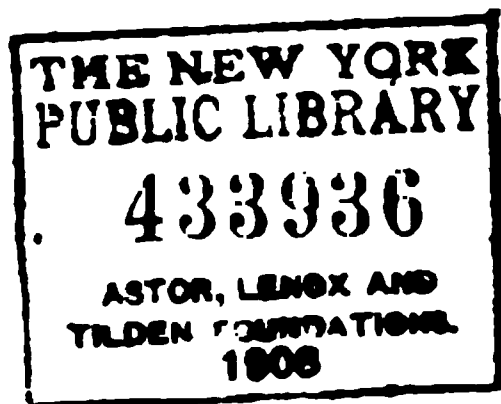
BY LEONARD BACON,
PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN NEW-HAVEN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOLUME I.

NEW-HAVEN:
PUBLISHED BY DURRIE & PECK.
1831.

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P R E F A C E.

IN making the following selections, I have, for obvious reasons, omitted those works of this venerated author which are familiar to the Christian public; and have been guided by a desire to provide a book suited to the wants of private Christians, and of Christian families. Had it been my object to afford the theological scholar the means of judging respecting Baxter's opinions and his modes of reasoning on disputed subjects in divinity, these two volumes would have been made up of very different materials.

The writings of Baxter are distinguished, even above those of his cotemporaries, by the peculiarities of the man and of the age in which he lived. Those only who know what the author was, what were the vicissitudes through which he passed, what were the changes and commotions of the times in which he lived, and what were the men with whom he had to do,—can enter fully into the spirit of his writings. It is simply with a view of helping the unlearned reader to a knowledge of the man and of the age, that the Life of Baxter has been prefixed to this selection from his works. Literary men and theologians will find the

more extensive and labored work of the late Mr. Orme on the same subject, much better adapted to their use.

When I began the preparation of these volumes, I expected to see the end of them much earlier. But I thank God that while I was studying the writings and the history of this eminent saint, and was seeking to imbibe that spirit which made him so successful a pastor, my studies were interrupted by a signal revival of the work of God among the people of my charge. Whatever delay has attended the publication, has been caused by this happy interruption.

Now reader, let these devout and searching treatises have that attention which they deserve. Read to learn what truth is, and to receive the truth in love ; to learn what duty is, and to *do* it.

NEW HAVEN, Oct. 28, 1831.

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THE
LIFE
OF
RICHARD BAXTER,

COMPILED CHIEFLY
FROM HIS OWN NARRATIVE.

BY LEONARD BACON.

THE LIFE
OF
RICHARD BAXTER.

PART FIRST.

THE life of Richard Baxter extends over a little more than three quarters of a century. And perhaps in all the history of England, no period of the same length can be selected more abundant in memorable events, or more critical in its bearings on the cause of true liberty and of pure christianity, than the seventy-six years between the birth of Baxter and his death.

The Reformation of the English Church had been begun about the middle of the preceding century, by a wayward and arbitrary monarch, to gratify his own passions. Henry VIII. renounced the supremacy of the pope, only that he might be pope himself within the limits of his own dominions. He dissolved the monasteries, because their immense possessions made them worth plundering. He made the hierarchy independent of Rome, and dependent on himself, because he would admit no power co-ordinate with that of the crown. And though in effecting these changes he was under the necessity of employing the agency of some true reformers, who shared in the spirit of Wickliffe and Luther and Calvin, nothing was farther from his design than the intellectual or moral renovation of the people.

On his death in 1547, an amiable prince, a boy in his tenth year, became nominally king of England and head of the English

church. During the short reign of Edward VI. the reformation was carried on with a hearty good will, by the good Cranmer and his associates in the regency. The bible in the English language, which, having been published by authority in the preceding reign, had been soon afterwards, by the same authority, suppressed, was now again placed by royal proclamation in the parish churches. Worship was performed in a language "understood of the people." The liturgy, first translated and established in the second year of this reign, was revised and purged from some of its imperfections three years afterwards, and then assumed nearly the form under which it is now used in the churches of the English Establishment and in the Episcopal churches of America. The design of the leading reformers in this reign was to carry the work of reformation as far as the circumstances in which they were placed would permit. They had their eye on the more perfect reformation of foreign churches; they were in the full confidence of foreign reformers; and their aim was to bring back the Church of England not only to the purity of scriptural doctrine, but to the simplicity of scriptural worship, and the strictness of scriptural discipline. In pursuance of this aim, foreign divines of eminence, hearty disciples of the Swiss reformers, in discipline as well as in doctrine, were made professors of theology in both the universities, and were placed in other stations of honor and influence. The progress of the work was hindered by the influence of a powerful popish party, including the heir apparent to the throne, many of the bishops, the mass of the clergy, and perhaps the numerical majority of the people; and its consummation was defeated by the premature death of the king in the sixth year of his reign.

The crown and the ecclesiastical supremacy then devolved upon the "bloody Mary," in the year 1553. This princess inherited a gloomy temper; and the circumstances of her early life, while they inspired her with a bigotted attachment to the religion of Rome, co-operated with that religion to aggravate all that was unfortunate in her native disposition. Under her government, a few months was time enough to undo all that had been done towards a reformation in the two preceding reigns. It was found that the king's supremacy was as able to bring back the old doctrines and the

old worship, as it had been to bring in the new. All king Edward's laws about religion were repealed by a single act of an obsequious parliament. A solemn reconciliation was effected with the See of Rome, and was ratified in the blood of an army of martyrs. Many of the active friends of the reformation, foreseeing the tempest, saved their lives by a timely flight to foreign countries. But God made the wrath of man to praise him ; for the six years of this reign contributed more perhaps than all the labors of Cranmer and his associates during the six years of Edward, to open the eyes and quicken the sluggish minds of the people, and to inspire them at once with a warm affection for the protestant faith, and with a hearty detestation of popery.

The commencement of the reign of Elizabeth, in 1558, is the era of the establishment of the reformation in England. This queen, of all the children of Henry VIII. inherited most largely the spirit of her father. She was against the pope, because the pope's supremacy was at variance with her own. She was against the spirit of protestantism, because she saw that its tendency was to make the people think for themselves. It soon appeared that, under her auspices, the reformation which during the reign of Edward had been progressive, and had been represented by its patrons as only begun, was to be progressive no longer. Those who had hoped that the new government would take up the work of reform where Cranmer and his associates had left it, and would bring the ecclesiastical affairs of the kingdom still nearer to a primitive simplicity in doctrine and in order, found that the queen's march of improvement was retrograde, and that the church, under her supremacy, was to be carried back towards the stately and ceremonious superstition of Romanism. But the popular mind had begun to take an interest in these matters. So many religious revolutions treading on each other's heels, had wakened thought and inquiry, even among those who were generally regarded as having only to obey the dictation of their superiors. To have suffered under Queen Mary for dissenting from the established faith and order, was extolled under Queen Elizabeth as meritorious ; and the people began to apprehend that religious truth and duty *might* be

something independent of the throne and the parliament, something which law could not fix, nor revolution overturn. Those who had seen so many burnt, and so many banished, for particular religious opinions, and who understood that the opinions then proscribed were now triumphant, were led to inquire what those opinions were, and on what basis they rested. Thus the public mind was ripening for a real reformation.

In these circumstances there sprung up a new party, the party of the PURITANS. Under King Edward, there had been dissension among the reformers, some wishing to go faster and farther than others. The question related chiefly to certain vestments of the popish priesthood, and the controversy was whether they should be retained or disused. By some it was deemed important to continue the use of those garments in the administration of public worship, at least for a while, lest by too sudden and violent a departure from all old usages and forms, the people might become unnecessarily and inveterately prejudiced against the reformation. By others those vestments were disapproved as relics of popish idolatry; and the disuse of them was insisted on, inasmuch as the people had been taught to regard them with a superstitious feeling, and to believe that they were essential to the validity of all religious administrations. What was at first little else than a question of expediency, soon became a question of conscience. Dr. Hooper, one of the most zealous and efficient leaders of the reformation, was imprisoned several months by his brethren, for refusing to accept the bishopric of Gloucester unless he might be consecrated without putting on the popish habits. That difficulty was at last compromised by the mediation of the Swiss reformers with Hooper on the one hand, and of the king and council with the ruling prelates on the other; and Ridley and Hooper afterwards labored with the same zeal for the truth, and at last suffered with the same patience the pains of martyrdom. During the persecution in Queen Mary's time, the controversy was revived in another form. Of the exiles who fled to the protestant countries on the continent, many admired, and were disposed to copy, the discipline and worship of the reformed churches; while others insisted on adhering to the letter of

King Edward's service-book. At Frankfort, the congregation at first agreed with entire unanimity on certain modes of worship adapted as they thought to their necessities ; but afterwards, a new company having arrived who brought with them a zealous attachment to the liturgy, a schism arose, and a considerable portion of the congregation, with the ministers, left the field to the new comers, and took up their residence in Geneva. On returning to their native country, many of those who had approved the constitution of the Swiss and French protestant churches, exerted themselves to promote a further reformation in England, or at least to secure some liberty in regard to matters which were acknowledged to be indifferent. Their influence as individuals, some of them personally connected with men high in rank and authority, their influence in the universities, where some of them occupied important stations, and their influence by means of the press, was employed to promote, by all lawful means, greater purity of doctrine and of discipline in the Church of England. But, as has already been intimated, *uniformity*, the imposing idea of a whole nation united in one church, with one faith and one form of worship, and subjected to a splendid hierarchy with the monarch at the head of it,—was the idol to which the queen and her counsellors were willing to sacrifice both peace and truth. Other matters besides habits and ceremonies were soon brought into debate. The entire constitution of the English church was called in question. Thus the breach grew wider. It was evident that the Puritans were not to be put down at a word ; for, to say nothing of the merits of their cause, they were the most learned divines, the most powerful preachers, and the most able disputants of the age. Thomas Cartwright, Margaret Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, of whom Beza said that “there was not a more learned man under the sun,” led the van in the dispute against prelacy. The venerable Miles Coverdale who having assisted Tindal in the translation of the bible, had been bishop of Exeter under King Edward, and had hardly escaped from death under Queen Mary, was a Puritan, and as such died poor and neglected. John Fox whose history of the martyrs was held in such veneration that it was ordered to be set up in the churches, was a Puritan, and shared the lot of Coverdale. Many

church dignitaries, including some of the bishops, were known to despise the habits and ceremonies, and to desire earnestly a more complete reformation. Yet nothing was yielded; the terms of uniformity were so defined as to be easier for papists than for those who doubted the completeness of the established reformation. Ministers convicted of non-conformity, though it were but the omission of a sentence or a ceremony in the liturgy, or a neglect to put on the popish surplice, were suspended, or deprived of their livings, then forbidden to preach, then—in many instances—imprisoned. When such men were thus turned out of their employments, and prohibited the exercise of their gifts, they found refuge and employment in the houses of many of the nobility and gentry, as private chaplains and instructors. In this way their principles were diffused among the highest classes of society. Meanwhile few preachers could be found to occupy the places of the ejected and silenced Puritans. Men without learning and without character were made clergymen; but neither the orders of the Queen in council, nor the imposition of episcopal hands could qualify them to be pastors. The people, especially the thinking and the sober people of the middling classes, when they saw the difference between the pious and zealous preachers who were deprived for non-conformity, and the ignorant and sometimes profligate readers who were put in their places, called the latter “dumb dogs,” (in allusion to the language of scripture,) and were the more ready to follow their persecuted teachers. And those, of every rank, who had begun to experience any thing of the power of christian truth, and to love the doctrines and duties of the gospel, and who desired to see sinners converted by the preaching of God’s word, sympathized deeply with these suffering ministers, and, out of respect to their evangelical character, were strongly disposed to favor and to adopt the principles for which they suffered. Thus, while Puritanism was making constant progress in the community, it was associated, almost from its origin, with serious and practical piety; and it soon came to pass that every man who cared more for godliness than his neighbors, or was more strict than they in his obedience to the precepts of the gospel, or who exhibited any faith in the principles of experimental religion, was called, by way of reproach, a Puritan.

Elizabeth died after a reign of forty-four years, and was succeeded by James I. in 1603. The Puritans, including both those who had been voluntarily or forcibly separated from the establishment, and those who by a partial or entire conformity still retained their connection with the church, had entertained strong hopes that a king who had reigned in Scotland from his infancy, who had made ample and frequent professions of his attachment to the ecclesiastical constitution of his native kingdom, and who had openly declared respecting the church of England, that "their service was an evil-said mass in English," would decidedly favor a more complete reformation. Accordingly he was met on his progress towards London, with numerous petitions, one of which was signed by nearly eight hundred clergymen, "desiring reformation of certain ceremonies and abuses of the church." But the king whom they addressed was at once a vainglorious foolish pedant, and an arbitrary treacherous prince; and the first year of his reign abundantly taught them the fallacy of all their hopes. For the sake of first raising, and then disappointing and crushing, the expectations of such as were dissatisfied with the existing system, a conference was held by royal authority at Hampton Court, to which were summoned, on one side four Puritan divines, with a minister from Scotland, and on the other side seventeen dignitaries of the church, nine of whom were bishops. At this meeting, after the king had first determined all things in consultation with the bishops and their associates, the Puritans were made to feel that they were brought there not in the spirit of conciliation, but to be made a spectacle to their enemies; not to argue, or to be argued with, before a king impartial and desiring to be led by reason, but to be ridiculed and scorned, insulted and reproached by a fool too elevated in station to be answered according to his folly. As for their desire of liberty in things indifferent, his language was, "I will have none of that; I will have one doctrine, one discipline, one religion in substance and ceremony: never speak more to that point, how far you are bound to obey." To their request that ministers might have the liberty of meeting under the direction of their ecclesiastical superiors, for mutual assistance and improvement, he replied peremptorily, in language characteristically

coarse and profane, that their plans tended to the subversion of monarchy, and charged them with desiring the overthrow of his supremacy. And his majesty's conclusion of the whole matter was, "I will make them conform, or I will harry them out of this land, or else worse." Neal adds very truly, "and he was as good as his word."

There were many things in the policy of the government, and in the character of the times, which promoted, during all this reign, the cause of Puritanism. The king, with nothing of the masculine energy by which Elizabeth controled her parliaments, had the most extravagant notions of his own divine right to govern without limitation, and was evidently bent on setting his will above all laws. Under such a prince, too arbitrary to be loved, and too foolish to be feared, the spirit of liberty naturally revived among the people. James in his folly, gave the name of Puritanism to every movement and every principle, wherever manifested, which breathed of popular privilege, or implied the existence of any limit to his prerogative. Thus the cause of the Puritans was associated, in the estimation both of court and country, with the cause of English freedom, and of resistance to the encroachments of arbitrary power; and the cause of the prelates was equally associated with all those measures of the government that were odious to the friends of liberty, or pernicious to the common welfare. Nor was there any incongruity in these associations. The Puritans were men of a stern and republican cast; they spake as if they had rights, and addressed the throne with their complaints. The prelates, in all their relations, were dependent on the court; they sympathized with the king in his love of power; they joined with him in his maxim, "No bishop, no king;" and they fed his oriental notions of royalty with strains of oriental adulation. Thus the party of the Puritans, though it lacked not the support of many a high-minded nobleman, rapidly became the party of the middling classes; while prelacy was espoused chiefly by the luxurious and unprincipled nobility on the one hand, and by their degraded and dependent peasantry on the other. At the same time, with a folly if possible still greater, the king deserted the protestant interest in Europe, of which both policy and principle ought to have made

him the head; sought first a Spanish, and afterwards a French alliance for his son; entered into treaties binding himself to protect and favor the papists in his own kingdom; and in many ways showed himself not unwilling to be reconciled to Rome. Nothing could have been more offensive to the people whose hatred of popery, kindled into a passion by the persecutions under Mary, and kept alive by the terror of the Spanish invasion, and by the national rejoicings over its defeat, had now been aggravated into an incurable horror by the recently discovered "Powder Plot." Hardly any thing could have given the Puritans a better introduction to popular favor; for they were cordial and zealous protestants, hating the very garments spotted with the pollutions of Rome; and what could their enemies be but secret papists. Another instance of the infatuation of this reign was the marked favor shown to the newly broached doctrines of Arminianism. Abbot, the Archbishop of Canterbury was indeed an opposer of those novelties, and promoted to the extent of his influence the preaching of evangelical truth, deeming it far more important than all the ceremonies; but the king introduced into several of the most important bishoprics men of another stamp, whose views were known to be at war with the doctrines of the reformers; and all who held the Calvinistic construction of the articles, however strict their conformity, were branded as "doctrinal Puritans," and for them there was no road to preferment. No wonder that under such influences, dissatisfaction with the existing ecclesiastical system grew deeper and stronger. James I. was succeeded by Charles I. in 1625.

In the scenes that followed, RICHARD BAXTER sustained an important part. He was born at Rowton, a village in Shropshire, November 12, 1615. His father (whose name was also Richard) was a freeholder possessed of a moderate estate at Eaton Constantine, another village in the same county, about five miles from Shrewsbury. His infancy was spent under the care and in the house of his maternal grandfather at Rowton. At about ten years of age he was taken home by his parents to their residence at Eaton Constantine.

His father had been in youth so much addicted to gaming, as to

have involved his property in very considerable embarrassments ; but, at a later period, the blessing of God on the simple reading of the scriptures, without any other religious advantages, had made him a devout and godly man. The influence of a father's example and serious instructions early affected the mind of the son with religious impressions, and gave him a remarkable tenderness of conscience. In subsequent years, the father expressed a strong belief that his son Richard was converted in infancy.

Respecting the religious advantages of his childhood, aside from domestic example and instruction, Baxter gives the following testimony. " We lived in a country that had but little preaching at all. In the village where I was born, there were four readers successively in six years time, ignorant men, two of them immoral in their lives, who were all my schoolmasters. In the village where my father lived, there was a reader of about eighty years of age that never preached, and had two churches about twenty miles distant. His eye sight failing him, he said common prayer without book ; but for the reading of the Psalms and chapters, he got a common thresher, and day-laborer one year, and a taylor another year ; for the clerk could not read well. And at last he had a kinsman of his own, (the excellentest stage-player in all the country, and a good gamester and good fellow,) that got orders and supplied one of his places. After him another younger kinsman that could write and read, got orders. And at the same time another neighbor's son that had been a while at school, turned minister, and, who would needs go further than the rest, ventured to preach, (and after got a living in Staffordshire) and when he had been a preacher about twelve or sixteen years, he was fain to give over, it being discovered that his orders were forged by the first ingenious stage-player. After him another neighbor's son took orders, when he had been a while an attorney's clerk, and a common drunkard, and tippled himself into so great poverty that he had no other way to live. It was feared that he and more of them came by their orders the same way with the forementioned person. These were the schoolmasters of my youth, (except two of them) who read common prayer on Sundays and holy-days, and taught school and tippled on the week days, and whipped the boys when they were drunk, so that

we changed them very oft. Within a few miles about us were near a dozen more ministers that were near eighty years old apiece, and never preached ; poor ignorant readers, and most of them of scandalous lives. Only three or four constant competent preachers lived near us, and those (though conformable all save one) were the common marks of the people's obloquy and reproach, and any that had but gone to hear them when he had no preaching at home, was made the derision of the vulgar rabble, under the odious name of a *Puritane*.*

The state of society in which his early years were spent, he describes in the same style. The character of the people corresponded with the character of their religious privileges. "In the village where I lived," he says, "the reader read the common prayer briefly, and the rest of the day, even till dark night almost, except eating time, was spent in dancing under a may-pole and a great tree, not far from my father's door ; where all the town did meet together. And though one of my father's own tenants was the piper, he could not restrain him nor break the sport ; so that we could not read the scripture in our family without the great disturbance of the taber and pipe and noise in the street. Many times my mind was inclined to be among them, and sometimes I broke loose from conscience and joined with them ; and the more I did it the more I was inclined to it. But when I heard them call my father, Puritan, it did much to cure me and alienate me from them ; for I considered that my father's exercise of reading the scripture, was better than their's, and would surely be better thought on by all men at the last ; and I considered what it was for which he and others were thus derided. When I heard them speak scornfully of others as Puritans, whom I never knew, I was at first apt to believe all the lies and slanders wherewith they loaded them. But when I heard my own father so reproached, and perceived the drunkards were the forwardest in the reproach, I perceived that it was mere malice. For my father never scrupled common prayer or ceremonies, nor spake against bishops, nor even so much as prayed

* Narrative of his life and times. Part I. p. 2.

but by a book or form, being not even acquainted with any that did otherwise. But only for reading scripture when the rest were dancing on the Lord's day, and for praying (by a form out of the end of the common prayer book) in his house, and for reproving drunkards and swearers, and for talking sometimes a few words of scripture and the life to come, he was reviled commonly by the name of Puritan, Precisian, and Hypocrite ; and so were the godly conformable ministers that lived any where near us, not only by our neighbors, but by the common talk of all the vulgar rabble of all about us. By this experience I was fully convinced that godly people were the best, and those that despised them and lived in sin and pleasure, were a malignant, unhappy sort of people ; and this kept me out of their company, except now and then when the love of sports and play enticed me."*

About the age of fifteen, the mind of Baxter was more deeply and permanently affected with the things that pertain to salvation. That tenderness of conscience, which has already been described as characteristic of his early childhood, made him feel with much sensibility the guilt of some boyish crimes into which he had been led by his ruder companions. In this distress, he met with an old torn book which had been lent to his father by a poor day-laborer. The book, though now obsolete, seems to have been blessed in its day to the conversion of many. It was written originally by a Jesuit on Roman Catholic principles, but had been carefully corrected by Edmund Bunney, a Puritan of Queen Elizabeth's time, after whom it was entitled "Bunney's Resolution." The reading of this book was attended with the happiest effects on his mind. "I had before heard," he says, "some sermons, and read a good book or two, which made me more love and honor godliness in the general ; but I had never felt any other change by them on my heart. Whether it were that till now I came not to that maturity of nature, which made me capable of discerning ; or whether it were that this was God's appointed time, or both together, I had no lively sight or sense of what I read till now. And in the reading of this book, it pleased God to awaken my soul, and show me the folly of sinning, and the

* Narrative, Part I, pp. 2, 3.

misery of the wicked, and the inexpressible weight of things eternal, and the necessity of resolving on a holy life, more than I was ever acquainted with before. The same things which I knew before, came now in another manner, with light and sense and seriousness to my heart. This cast me at first into fears of my condition; and those drove me to sorrow and confession and prayer, and so to some resolution for another kind of life. And many a day I went with a throbbing conscience, and saw that I had other matters to mind, and another work to do in the world, than I had minded well before.

“Yet whether sincere conversion began now, or before, or after, I was never able to this day* to know; for I had before had some love to the things and people which were good, and a restraint from other sins except those forementioned; and so much from those that I seldom committed most of them, and when I did, it was with great reluctance. And both now and formerly I knew that Christ was the only Mediator by whom we must have pardon, justification and life. But even at that time, I had little lively sense of the love of God in Christ to the world in me, nor of my special need of him; for all Papists almost are too short upon this subject.”†

At this time his father bought of a pedlar at the door, another book, “The Bruised Reed,” by Dr. Richard Sibbs. This he found adapted to the state of his mind in those circumstances. It disclosed to him more clearly the love of God towards him, and gave him livelier apprehensions of the mystery of Redemption, and of his obligations to the Savior. Afterwards a servant came into the family with a volume of the works of William Perkins, another ancient and eminent Puritan divine; the reading of which instructed him further, and gave new strength to his determination. “Thus,” he says, “without any means but books, was God pleased to resolve me for himself.” During all this period of his education and of his christian experience, neither his father nor himself had any acquaintance with a single individual better instructed than themselves on the subject of religion. It is also worthy of notice

* Written in 1684, thirty-four years afterwards. † Narrative, Part I. p. 3.

that they had never heard an extemporaneous prayer. "My prayers," says Baxter, "were the confession in the common prayer book and sometimes one of Mr. Bradford's prayers in a book called his 'Prayers and Meditations,' and sometimes a prayer out of another prayer book which we had."

The ignorant and tippling schoolmasters, under whom he acquired the earliest rudiments of education, have already been described. Of a Mr. John Owen, master of a considerable free school at Wroxeter, near his father's residence, he speaks with respect. In that school he was fitted for the university. But when his studies were advanced to that point, he was diverted from his original design of obtaining a regular education at one of the established seats of learning. His teacher proposed that instead of going to the university, he should be put under the tuition of a Mr. Wickstead chaplain to the council at Ludlow, who was allowed to have a single pupil. This situation, he was made to believe, was much more favorable to study than the university; and his parents regarded the new proposal with much partiality, as by such an arrangement their only son would still be kept near them. Accordingly he went to Ludlow Castle. But his new instructor taught him nothing. The chaplain to the council was too much engaged with his efforts "to please the great ones and to seek preferment;" he had no time or attention to bestow on his single pupil. Yet he did nothing to hinder the progress of the active and powerful young mind which he had undertaken to instruct; and with time enough and books, such a mind could not fail to make progress.

In his new circumstances he was exposed to many temptations, the Castle and town being full of idleness and dissipation. But while there, he formed an intimate acquaintance with a man who though he afterwards apostatised, was then distinguished by strong and fervid religious feelings. His intercourse with his friend not only kept him on his guard, but kindled his own feelings to a higher pitch of excitement than they had ever attained before.

After a year and a half spent at Ludlow Castle, he returned to his father's house. His former teacher Owen being sick with consumption, he, at the request of Lord Newport the patron, took charge of the school for a few months. The death of Owen and

the appointment of a successor soon left him at liberty; and having resolved to enter the ministry, he put himself under the instruction of Mr. Francis Garbet then minister at Wroxeter, of whom he speaks with affection and reverence. Under this teacher he commenced, with much zeal, those metaphysical pursuits to which he was ever afterwards so much devoted. His studies however were much interrupted by disease, and sometimes by mental distress approaching to religious melancholy.

Not far from this time, when he was about eighteen years of age, he was persuaded for a little while to abandon his plans and expectations in regard to preaching the gospel. Mr. Wickstead, his tutor at Ludlow, who seems to have regarded him with a friendly interest, proposed that he should go to London in the hope of obtaining some office about the court. Baxter himself disliked the proposal; but his parents not having any great inclination to see their son a clergyman, (which cannot be thought strange considering the specimens of clerical character with which they were acquainted,) were so much pleased with it, that he felt himself constrained to yield to their wishes. Accordingly he went to London, and by the friendly aid of Mr. Wickstead, was introduced to the patronage of Sir Henry Herbert, then master of the revels. He stayed with Sir Henry at Whitehall about a month; and in that short time had enough of the court. For when he saw, as he says, "a stage play instead of a sermon on the Lord's days in the afternoon," and "heard little preaching but what was as to one part against the Puritans," he was glad to be gone. At the same time his mother being sick desired his return. So he "resolved to bid farewell to those kinds of employments and expectations." It is no wonder if, after this piece of experience, he entertained very little respect for the religion of the court and the king, and was more inclined than ever toward the principles of the calumniated Puritans.

When he came home, he found his mother in extreme pain. She continued in lingering distress for about five months, and died on the tenth of May 1635. More than a year afterwards his father married Mary the daughter of Sir Thomas Hurkes, a woman of eminent excellence, whose "holiness, mortification, contempt of

the world, and fervent prayer," made her "a blessing to the family, an honor to religion, and a pattern to those that knew her." This is the character given of her by her step-son, after her departure at the age of ninety-six.

He now pursued his preparation for the ministry without any further interruption save what was occasioned by the extreme infirmity of his constitution and the repeated attacks of disease. His physical frame, though naturally sound was never firm or vigorous; and from childhood he was subject to a nervous debility. At fourteen years of age he had the small pox; and in connection with that disease, he brought upon himself by improper exposure and diet, a violent catarrh and cough, which prevented all quiet sleep at night. After two years this was attended with spitting of blood and other symptoms of consumption; and from this time to the extreme old age at which he left the world, he lived a dying life. The ever varying remedies which he successively tried, following from time to time the discordant suggestions of physicians and other advisers, had little effect except to vary, and with each variation as it seemed, to aggravate the symptoms of disease. The record of his diseases and his remedies need not be transcribed. His "rheumatic head;" his "flatulent stomach that turned all things into wind;" his blood in such a state as to occasion the frequent excoriation of his fingers' ends; and his excessive bleedings at the nose—both periodical every spring and fall—and occasional, whenever he was subjected to any unusual heat, explain his intervals of melancholy, afford an apology for the alleged acerbity of his temper, and make the industry of his life, especially when viewed in connection with the results, almost miraculous.

This living continually at the gate of death, and as it were within sight of an immediate retribution, had much to do in the formation of his character as a christian and as a minister of the gospel. When, at the age of seventeen, he was thought to be sinking in a consumption, the nearness of death set him on a close and trembling examination of his fitness to die. Thus was he "long kept with the calls of approaching death at one ear and the questionings of a doubtful conscience at the other;" and afterwards he "found that this method of God's was very wise," and that no other was

so likely to have tended to his good. It humbled him and led him to abasing views of himself. It restrained him from the levity and vanity of youth, and helped him to meet temptations to sensuality with the greatest fear. It made the doctrine of redemption the more delightful to him; and the studies and considerations to which it led him, taught him how to live by faith on Christ. It made the world seem to him like "a carcass that had neither life nor loveliness." "It destroyed," he says, "those ambitious desires after literate fame, which was the sin of my childhood. I had a desire before to have attained the highest academical degrees and reputation of learning, and to have chosen out my studies accordingly; but sickness and solicitousness for my doubting soul did drive away all these thoughts as fooleries and children's plays."

What he says respecting the effect of all this on the course of his preparation for the ministry, is worthy of a particular attention. "It set me upon that method of my studies, which since then I have found the benefit of, though at the time I was not satisfied with myself. It caused me first to seek God's kingdom and his righteousness, and most to mind the one thing needful, and to determine first of my ultimate end, by which I was engaged to choose out and to prosecute all other studies but as meant to that end. Therefore divinity was not only carried on with the rest of my studies with an equal hand, but always had the first and chiefest place. And it caused me to study practical divinity first, and in the most practical books, in a practical order, *doing all purposely for the informing and reforming of my own soul.*"* So that I had read a multitude of our English practical treatises before I had ever read any other bodies of divinity than Ursine and Amesius, or two or three more. By which means my affection was carried on with my judgment; and by that means I prosecuted all my studies with unweariedness and delight; and by that means all that I read did stick the better in my memory;—and also less of my time was lost by lazy intermissions, but my bodily infirmities always caused me to lose (or spend) much of it in motion and corporeal exercises, which

* A new day will dawn on the church, when all students of theology adopt this principle.

was sometimes by walking, and sometimes at the plow and such country labors.

“ But one loss I had by this method, which hath proved irreparable ; I missed that part of learning which stood at the greatest distance (in my thoughts) from my ultimate end, though no doubt but remotely it may be a valuable means—and I could never since find time to get it. Besides the Latin tongue, and but a mediocrity in Greek, with an inconsiderable trial at the Hebrew long after, I had no great skill in languages ; though I saw that an accurateness and thorough insight in the Greek and Hebrew were very desirable. But I was so eagerly carried after the knowledge of things, that I too much neglected the study of words. And for the mathematics, I was an utter stranger to them, and never could find in my heart to divert my studies that way. But in order to the knowledge of divinity, my inclination was most to logic and metaphysics, with that part of physics which teacheth of the soul, contenting myself at first with a slighter study of the rest. And these had my labor and delight ; which occasioned me (perhaps) too soon to plunge myself very early into the study of controversies, and to read all the schoolmen I could get. For next to practical divinity, no books so suited with my disposition as Aquinas, Scotus, Durandus, Ockam, and their disciples ; because I thought they narrowly searched after truth, and brought things out of the darkness of confusion. For I could never from my first studies endure confusion. Till equivocals were explained, and definition and distinction led the way, I had rather hold my tongue than speak ; and was never more weary of learned men’s discourses, than when I heard them wrangling about unexpounded words or things, and eagerly disputing before they understood each others’ minds, and vehemently asserting modes and consequences and adjuncts, before they considered of the *Quod sit*, the *Quid sit*, or the *Quotuplex*. I never thought I understood any thing till I could anatomize it, and see the parts distinctly, and the conjunction of the parts as they make up the whole. Distinction and method seemed to me of that necessity, that without them I could not be said to know ; and the disputes that forsook them, or abused them, seemed but as incoherent dreams.”

Allusion has been made to the fears and difficulties which at-

tended his religious views and feelings at this period of his life. These were, perhaps, in no respect peculiar. Few christians can read what he records on this subject, without finding much that coincides with their own experience, and much, in the way of analysis and explanation, that is adapted to their own necessities.

“As for those doubts of my own salvation, which exercised me for many years, the chiefest causes of them were these :

“1. Because I could not distinctly trace the workings of the Spirit upon my heart, in that method which Mr. Bolton, Mr. Hooker, Mr. Rogers and other divines describe ; nor knew the time of my conversion, being wrought on by the forementioned degrees. But since then, I understood that the soul is in too dark and passionate a plight at first, to be able to keep an account of the order of its own operations ; and that *preparatory grace* being sometimes longer and sometimes shorter, and the first degree of special grace being usually very small, it is not possible that one of very many should be able to give any true account of the *just time* when special grace began, and advanced him above the state of preparation.

“2. My second doubt was as aforesaid, because of the hardness of my heart, or want of such a lively apprehension of things spiritual, which I had about things corporeal. And though I still groan under this as my sin and want, yet I now perceive that a soul in flesh doth work so much after the manner of the flesh, that it much desireth sensible apprehensions ; but things spiritual and distant are not so apt to work upon them, and to stir the passions, as things present and sensible are ; especially being known so darkly as the state and operations of separated souls are known to us who are in the body ; and that the rational operations of the higher faculties (the intellect and will) may without so much passion, set God and things spiritual highest within us, and give them the pre-eminence, and subject all carnal interest to them, and give them the government of the heart and life ; and that this is the ordinary state of a believer.

“3. My next doubt was lest education and fear had done all that was ever done upon my soul, and regeneration and love were yet to seek ; because I had found convictions from my childhood, and had found more fear than love in all my duties and restraints.

“ But I afterwards perceived that education is God’s ordinary way for the conveyance of his grace, and ought no more to be set in opposition to the Spirit than the preaching of the word; and that it was the great mercy of God to begin with me so soon, and to prevent such sins as might else have been my shame and sorrow while I lived; and that repentance is good, but prevention and innocence is better, which though we cannot obtain in perfection, yet the more the better. And I understand that though fear without love be not a state of saving grace, and greater love to the world than to God be not consistent with sincerity; yet a little predominant love (prevailing against worldly love) conjunct with a far greater measure of fear, may be a state of special grace; and that fear being an easier and irresistible passion, doth oft obscure that measure of love which is indeed within us: and that the soul of a believer groweth up by degrees from the more troublesome and safe operation of fear, to the more high and excellent operations of complacential love; even as it hath more of the sense of the love of God in Christ, and belief of the heavenly life which it approacheth; and that it is long before love be sensibly predominant in respect of fear (that is, of self-love and self-preservation) though at the first it is predominant against worldly love. And I found that my hearty love of the word of God and of the servants of God, and my desires to be more holy, and especially the hatred of my heart for loving God no more, and my love to love him, and be pleasing to him, was not without some love to himself, though it worked more sensibly on his nearer image.

“ 4. Another of my doubts was because my grief and humiliation were no greater, and because I could weep no more for this. But I understood at last that God breaketh not all men’s hearts alike, and that the gradual proceedings of his grace might be one cause, and my nature not apt to weep for other things, another; and that the change of our heart from sin to God is true repentance, and a loathing of ourselves is true humiliation; and he that had rather leave his sin, than have leave to keep it, and had rather be the most holy, than leave to be unholy or less holy, is neither without true repentance, nor the love of God.

“ 5. Another of my doubts was, because I had after my change

committed some sins deliberately and knowingly ; and be they never so small, I thought he that could sin upon knowledge and deliberation had no true grace, and that if I had but had as strong temptations to fornication, drunkenness, fraud or other more heinous sins, I might also have committed them. And if these proved that I had then no saving grace, after all that I had felt, I thought it unlikely that I ever should have any.

“ This stuck with me longer than any ; and the more, because that every sin which I knowingly committed did renew it ; and the terms on which I receive consolation against it are these : (Not as those that think every sin against knowledge doth nullify all our former grace and unregenerate us ; and that every time we repent of such, we have a new regeneration, but)

“ 1. All saving grace doth indeed put the soul into a state of enmity to sin as sin, and consequently to every known sin.

“ 2. This enmity must show itself in victory ; for bare striving, when we are overcome, and yielding to sin when we have awhile striven against it, proveth not the soul to be sincere.

“ 3. Yet do not God’s children always overcome ; for then they should not sin at all ; but he that saith he hath no sin deceiveth himself.

“ 4. God’s children always overcome those temptations which would draw them to a wicked unholy state of life, and would unregenerate them and change their state, and turn them back from God to a fleshly, worldly life ; and also to any particular sin which proveth such a state, and signifieth a heart which hath more love to the world than to God,—which may well be called a mortal sin, as proving the sinner in a state of death ; as others may be called venial sins, which are consistent with spiritual life and a justified state.

“ 5. Therefore whenever a justified person sinneth, the temptation at that time prevaieth against the Spirit and the love of God ; not to the extinction of the love of God, nor the destruction of the habit, nor the setting up of the contrary habit in predominance ; as setting up the habitual love of any sin above the habitual love of God. The inclination of the soul is still most to God ; and he esteemeth him most, and preferreth him in the adherence of his will, in the main bent and course of heart and life ; only he is overcome

and so far abateth the actual love and obedience to God, as to commit this particular act of sin, and remit or omit that act of love.

“6. And this it is possible for a justified person to do upon some deliberation; for as grace may strive one instant only in one act, and then be suddenly overcome; so it may strive longer, and keep the mind on considerations of restraining motives, and yet be overcome.

“7. For it is not the mere length of consideration, which is enough to excite the heart against sin, but there must be clearness of light, and liveliness in those considerations. And sometimes a sudden conviction is so clear, and great, and sensible, that in an instant it stirreth up the soul to an utter abhorrence of the temptation, when the same man at another time may have all the same thoughts, in so sleepy a degree as shall not prevail.

“8. And though a little sin must be hated, and universal obedience must prove our sincerity, and no one sin must be wilfully continued in; yet it is certain that God’s servants do not often commit sins materially great and heinous, (as fornication, drunkenness, perjury, oppression, deceit, etc.) and yet that they often commit some lesser sins, (as idle thoughts, and idle words, and dullness in holy duties, defectiveness in the love of God, and omission of holy thoughts and words, etc.) and that the tempter often getteth advantage even with them, by telling that the sin is small, and such as God’s servants ordinarily commit; and that naturally we fly with greater fear from a great danger than from a less; from a wound in the heart than from a cut finger. And therefore one reason why idle words and sinful thoughts are, even deliberately, oftener committed than most heinous sins, is because the soul is not awaked so much by fear and care to make resistance; and love needeth the help of fear in this our weak condition.

“9. And it is certain that usually the servants of God being men of most knowledge, do therefore sin against more knowledge than others do; for there are but few sins, which they know not to be sins. They know that idle thoughts and words, and the omissions of the contrary, are their sins.

“10. There are some sins of such difficulty to avoid, (as the disorder or omission of holy thoughts, and the defects of love to God,

etc.) and some temptations so strong, and the soul in so sluggish a case to resist, that good thoughts which are in deliberation used against them, are borne down at last and are less effectual.

“11. And our present stock of habitual grace is never sufficient of itself without co-operating grace from Christ; and therefore when we provoke him to withhold his help, no wonder if we show our weakness, so far as to stumble in the way to heaven, or to step out into some by-path, or break over the hedge, and sometimes to look back, and yet never to turn back, and go again from God to the world.

“12. And because no fall of a saint which is venial, an infirmity, consistent with grace, doth either destroy the habit of love and grace, or set up a contrary habit above it, nor yet pervert the scope and bent of the conversation, but only prevaieth to a particular act, it therefore followeth, that the soul riseth up from such a sin by true repentance, and that the new nature or habit of love within us will work out the sin as soon as it hath advantage; as a needle in the compass will return to its proper point, when the force that moved it doth cease; and as a running stream will turn clear again, when the force that muddied it is past. And this repentance will do much to increase our hatred of the sin, and fortify us against the next temptation; so that though there be some sins which through our great infirmity we daily commit, as we daily repent of them (as disordered thoughts, defects of love, neglect of God, &c.) yet it will not be so with those sins which a willing, sincere, habituated penitent hath more in his power to cast out.

“13. And yet when all this is done, sin will breed fears, (and the more by how much the more deliberate and wilful it is;) and the best way to keep under doubts and terrors, and to keep up comfort, is to keep up actual obedience, and quickly and penitently return when we have sinned.

“This much I thought meet to say, for the sake of others, who may fall into the same temptations and perplexities.

“The means, by which God was pleased to give me some peace and comfort, were,

“1. The reading of many consolatory books.

“2. The observation of other men's condition. When I heard

many make the very same complaints that I did, who were people of whom I had the best esteem, for the uprightness and holiness of their lives, it much abated my fears and troubles. And in particular it much comforted me, to read him whom I loved as one of the holiest of all the martyrs, Mr. John Bradford, subscribing himself so often, "the hard-hearted sinner;" and "the miserable hard-hearted sinner," even as I was used to do myself.

"3. And it much increased my peace when God's Providence called me to the comforting many others that had the same complaints. While I answered their doubts I answered my own; and the charity, which I was constrained to exercise for them, redounded to myself, and insensibly abated my fears, and procured me an increase of quietness of mind.

"And yet after all, I was glad of probabilities instead of full, undoubted certainties; and to this very day, though I have no such degree of doubtfulness as is any great trouble to my soul, or procureth any great disquieting fears, yet cannot I say, that I have such a certainty of my own sincerity in grace, as excludeth all doubts and fears of the contrary."*

His ill health increased as he pursued his studies after his return from London; and the spirituality and devotedness of his mind seems to have maintained a progress corresponding with the decay of his physical system. From the age of twenty-one to near twenty-three, he had no expectation of surviving a single year. And in these circumstances so clear were his views of the eternal world and its interests, that he was exceedingly desirous to communicate those apprehensions "to such ignorant, presumptuous, careless sinners, as the world aboundeth with." As he thought of preaching, he felt many discouragements. He not only knew that the want of university honors and titles was likely to diminish the estimation in which he would be held, and the respect with which he would be heard by many; but he was conscious of the actual defects of his education, and felt deeply all his personal insufficiency. "But

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 6—9.

yet," he adds, "expecting to be so quickly in another world, the great concerns of miserable souls, did prevail with me against all these impediments; and being conscious of a thirsty desire of men's conversion and salvation, and of some competent persuading faculty of expression, which fervent affections might help to actuate, I resolved that if one or two souls only might be won to God, it would easily recompense all the dishonor which, for want of titles, I might undergo from men. And indeed I had such clear convictions of the madness of secure presumptuous sinners, and the unquestionable reasons which should induce men to a holy life, and of the unspeakable greatness of that work which in this hasty inch of time we have all to do, that I thought that a man that could be ungodly if he did but hear these things, was fitter for Bedlam than for the reputation of a sober rational man."* The man who undertakes the ministry with such views, and has a fair opportunity to exercise that ministry, never will fail to be successful, so long as the gospel is the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation.

As yet, he had not entered into the questions on which the church of England was divided. While young he had never been acquainted with any who refused to conform to the established order and ceremonies of the church. He was twenty years of age, when he first formed an acquaintance with a few zealous and devoted non-conforming ministers in Shrewsbury and the vicinity, whose fervent prayers, and spiritual conversation, and holy lives, were highly profitable to him; and when he found that these men were troubled and vexed by the ecclesiastical authorities, he could not but be somewhat prejudiced in their favor, and began to doubt whether their opposers "could be the genuine followers of the Lord of love." Yet he resolved to hold his judgment in suspense till he should have an opportunity to investigate the subject. And his prepossessions, generally, were in favor of conformity. He had been educated in that way. Mr. Garbet and the other ministers with whom he was most intimate, on whom he depended for direction in his studies, and to whom he looked with much deference

* Narrative, Part I. p. 12.

to their learning as well as with respect for their piety, were decided conformists. The only Puritan books which he had read, had been books of practical religion; for books against the order and ceremonies of the church, were in those days not easily circulated. But on the other hand his instructors and friends had put into his hands all the works which were then considered the best in defense of their opinions and practice. Thus being led to think in general that the conformists had the better side of the question, he had no scruple about the subscription required at ordination. At about twenty-three years of age he was ordained in due form according to the ritual of the church of England by the bishop of Worcester.

His first station was at Dudley in Worcestershire, where by the interest of a friend with the patron, he had obtained a place as master of a free school, with an usher. This situation accorded with his wishes, for it gave him opportunity to preach in destitute places, and at the same time relieved him of the responsibility of a pastoral charge, which he felt unwilling to sustain at the commencement of his ministry.

In this place he soon found himself compelled to enter on the examination of the great controversy of those times. He found that many private christians in that neighborhood were non-conformists; one of them resided under the same roof with him. The dispute took so strong a hold on the religious community around him, that he soon resolved on a serious and impartial investigation. The result of his inquiries at that time is worth stating, as it shows what were the disputed questions of the day.

In regard to *episcopacy* he had then no difficulty, for he had not at that time noticed the difference between arguments for an episcopacy in the abstract, and arguments for the particular diocesan episcopacy which existed in England. On the question of *kneeling at the Lord's supper*, he was fully satisfied that conformity was lawful. In regard to the *surplice*, he doubted; he would not wear it unless compelled to on pain of expulsion from the ministry; and the fact was he never wore it in his life. Respecting the *ring* in marriage he had no scruple. The *cross in baptism* he thought unlawful, though he felt some doubt respecting it; and therefore he never used it. A *form of prayer*, he considered in itself lawful;

and he thought such a form might be prescribed by public authority ; and though he regarded the English liturgy as objectionable on account of its " disorder and defectiveness," his conclusion was that it might be used in the ordinary public worship, by such as had no liberty to do better. The want of *discipline* in the church was in his view a great evil ; though he " did not then understand that the very frame of diocesan prelacy excluded it," but supposed that the bishops might have remedied that evil if they would. The *subscription* required before ordination he now began to disapprove ; and he blamed himself for having yielded to that claim. So from this time he became, as he says, a non-conformist to these three things, " subscription, and the cross in baptism, and the promiscuous giving of the Lord's supper to all drunkards, swearers, fornicators, scorers at godliness, etc. that are not excommunicated by a bishop or chancellor that is out of their acquaintance." Still he was far from acting with the more zealous and thorough non-conformists. He often debated the matter with them ; for he regarded the disposition which some of them had to forsake and renounce the established church, as a serious and threatening evil. He labored to repress their censoriousness and the boldness and bitterness of their language against the bishops, and to reduce them to greater patience and charity. " But I found," he adds, " that their sufferings from the bishops, were the great impediment to my success ; and he that will blow the coals must not wonder if some sparks do fly in his face ; and that to persecute men and then call them to charity, is like whipping children to make them give over crying. The stronger sort of christians can bear mulcts and imprisonments and reproaches for obeying God and conscience without abating their charity to their persecutors ; but to expect this from all the weak and injudicious, the young and passionate, is against all reason and experience. I saw that he that will be loved, must love ; and he that rather chooseth to be more feared than loved, must expect to be hated, or loved but diminutively. And he that will have children, must be a father ; and he that will be a tyrant, must be contented with slaves."

He occupied his post at Dudley only nine months. The people were of a degraded class, having been much addicted to drunk-

eness ; but his labors among them were attended with an encouraging measure of success. Being invited to Bridgenorth, the second town in his native county, to preach there as assistant to the worthy pastor of that place, he left his school, and thenceforward had no work but that of the ministry. At Bridgenorth he had an excellent colleague, a full congregation, and owing to some peculiar circumstances, a freedom from all those things respecting which he had scruples or objections.

The people to whom he here preached were 'ignorant and dead-hearted.' The town was one which afforded the people no uniform and regular employment, and at the same time was full of inns and alehouses. Of course he labored at a great disadvantage. His preaching however was very popular, and was blessed to the conversion of some of his hearers. But the tippling and evil-communications and stupidity of the people were such, that though, as he says, he never preached any where with more fervor or with more vehement desires for the conversion of his hearers, his success was much less than it afterwards was in other places.

While Baxter continued at Bridgenorth, the controversy, civil and ecclesiastical, which had so long been growing up, and which from year to year had agitated the nation with a deeper and stronger interest, broke out in those commotions which overturned the hierarchy and the throne. A brief view of the progress of affairs from the beginning of this reign, seems proper in this connection, as the means of illustrating to readers not familiar with the details of English history, many events recorded or referred to in the sequel of this narrative.

Charles I. succeeded to the throne of his father at the age of twenty-five, in circumstances which demanded of the chief magistrate, not so much great force and splendid talents, as good common sense, and plain common honesty, directed by a spirit of kindness towards the people. The English nation had long been accustomed to some measure of freedom ; and though the constitution of the kingdom was not then that well defined system of distributed and balanced powers which it now is ; and though sovereigns had often transcended the bounds of law, and in many in-

stances had made their own will their rule of government ; it had been well understood, from the earliest ages, that the rights of the subject were as real as the prerogative of the monarch. The monarchy had always been limited, not only, like every other ancient monarchy in Europe, by the nature of the feudal system, but limited still more by many a provision for the security of individual rights. And though the boundaries of power seem to have advanced and receded from time to time, as the monarch was more or less energetic, or as the barons and people were more or less spirited in the assertion of their rights, it was at every period, and under every reign, an indisputable principle of English freedom, that no man could be rightfully deprived of property or liberty but in the course of law, and that no law could be made but by the consent of the people expressed in parliament. James I. himself a foreigner in England, and having neither knowledge of the English character nor sympathy with the English spirit, attempted to govern on the most arbitrary principles. The other monarchs of Europe having gradually undermined, or violently overthrown, the barriers of the old feudal constitutions, had made themselves absolute ; and the successor of Elizabeth, so far as he was capable of forming or comprehending any scheme of policy, pursued his measures with reference to a similar result. Had he been as much of a man as she was to whose throne he succeeded, his success might not have been quite impossible. As it was, his imbecile efforts to play the absolute monarch, at once roused in his subjects the spirit to assert their rights, and gave them strength to resist aggression. He died baffled, disgraced, despised and unlamented ; and his son inherited, not only his throne already beginning to be undermined, but his weak and vacillating judgment, his faithless disposition, his principles of usurpation and arbitrary misrule, his love of ecclesiastical pomp and ceremony, and even his subjection to the influence of a worthless and odious favorite.

The first important act of Charles after his accession was his marriage with Henrietta a sister of the king of France, which had been agreed on during the lifetime of his father. The bride brought with her into the kingdom a retinue of Romish servants, priests and courtiers, who by the marriage treaty were to be allow-

ed the uninterrupted exercise of all the rites of their religion. Hardly anything could have been more obnoxious to the protestant feelings of the nation, than the insolence of these privileged foreigners. The queen of England was seen walking through the streets of the city to do penance, "her confessor meanwhile riding by her in his coach;" and as if on purpose to rouse popular indignation into frenzy, her priests led her to Tyburn "there to present her devotions for the departed souls of the papists who had been executed at that place, on account of the gunpowder treason, and other enormous crimes."* If any thing had been wanting to excite prejudice against the superstitions of Rome, or against the court as inclined to popery, such proceedings were best adapted to that end.

The parliament, assembled by the young monarch at Westminster immediately after the arrival of the queen, and thence adjourned to Oxford on account of the plague, betrayed a new spirit, and gave decided indications that the time had come in which the people would be heard and would make their rights respected. There were men in the house of commons who were conscious of the increased political importance which the increase of wealth and intelligence had given to the middling classes; who had witnessed, during the preceding reigns, the encroachments of arbitrary power on the ancient privileges of the people; and who saw that the accession of a new prince, involved in war, embarrassed with debt, and guided by a weak and odious favorite, afforded them the best opportunity to assert their rights, and to erect new barriers against future usurpation. Accordingly, when called upon to replenish the royal treasury, they began by voting a supply so limited as to keep the court still dependent on the commons, and to secure for themselves the vantage ground in negotiating for the redress of grievances. To the king's explanations of his necessities and his engagements they were inexorable; and instead of giving money to make him independent of his people, they joined in a petition setting forth the causes of the increase of popery, with an enumeration of such remedies as in their judgment ought to be ap-

* H. L' Estrange's View of King Charles, quoted in the "Selection from the Harleian Miscellany," p. 331. London, 1793.

plied. Among the remedies, they proposed ' that the preaching of the word of God might be enlarged, and that to this purpose the bishops be advised to make use of the labors of such able ministers as have been formerly silenced, advising and beseeching them to behave themselves peaceably.' The king's answer was full of compliance, especially and repeatedly promising that the laws against popery should be put in execution; and the next day his special warrant releasing eleven popish priests from prison, gave them a practical illustration of his fidelity to his engagements. A law was passed (which was never executed, and which the king not many years afterwards set aside by proclamation) for the prevention of unlawful pastimes on the Lord's day. Some other proceedings helped to show the strong and determined spirit of the commons in relation to the questions between the party of the court and the prelates on the one hand, and the party of the people and the puritans on the other. The king saw that if such a parliament continued he must be content with the condition of a limited monarch, and must secure the affections of the people by conducting his administration for their benefit. Determined not to yield, he dissolved the parliament, and made a feeble and unpopular effort to raise money by way of loan, taxing individuals according to their estimated ability, and promising repayment at the end of eighteen months.

The resources thus secured were soon exhausted in an ill-conducted and abortive enterprise, the object of which was to intercept and plunder the Spanish fleet as it returned laden with the product of the mines of South America. Another parliament was called, which, like the preceding, first voted a limited supply, and then immediately took up the subject of grievances. An impeachment of the duke of Buckingham, the obnoxious prime minister, was undertaken with much zeal. The king who seems to have had little knowledge of the genius of the nation which he governed, and as little of the principles of human nature, took every opportunity to manifest his contempt of the commons. Besides lesser measures of irritation, he imprisoned two members of the house, employed as managers of the impeachment; and then was obliged to release them. He sent his commands to the house to

enlarge and finish the bill for a supply ; for, though the supply was voted, it had not yet become a law. At the same time he threatened them, both by a message, and in the speeches of his ministers, that if he found them still uncomplying he should try "new counsels."* After a short session the parliament was dissolved, before any important business had been finished, before even the vote for a supply had been passed into a law.

There was an interval of two years before the assembling of another parliament. In this interval the king made some experiment of the new counsels which he had threatened. Various irregular and arbitrary measures were employed to provide a revenue. These were of course unpopular, and were pursued with characteristic inefficiency, till, by the event of a battle on the continent, a new emergency arose in the king's affairs. Then, the want of money in the treasury having become more pressing, and the insufficiency of halfway measures more glaring than ever, an act of council was passed and duly promulgated, demanding of each subject just what he would have paid had the proposed supply been granted by the parliament. The people, however, were informed for their satisfaction that the sums exacted were to be called loans and not taxes. To enforce the payment of this revenue, soldiers were quartered upon the refractory ; and he who declined lending his money to the king, found that refusal was likely to cost more than submission. Those who went so far as to persuade or encourage others to refuse, were thrown into prison. Appeal was made to the law, against such invasion of personal liberty ;

* "I pray you consider," said Sir Dudley Carleton, vice chamberlain, in the house of commons, "what these new counsels are, or may be. I fear to declare those that I conceive. In all christian kingdoms, you know that parliaments were in use anciently, by which those kingdoms were governed in a most flourishing manner ; until the monarchs began to know their own strength, and seeing the turbulent spirit of their parliaments, at length they, by little and little, began to stand on their prerogatives, and at last overthrew the parliaments throughout Christendom, except here only with us. Let us be careful, then, to preserve the king's good opinion of parliaments, which bringeth such happiness to the nation, and makes us envied of all others, while there is this sweetness between his majesty and the commons ; lest we lose the repute of a free people, by our turbulency in parliament." Hume's History of England. Vol. III. pp. 360, 361. Philad. 1828.

but the courts of justice, newly organized by the king to meet the emergency, refused to sustain the appeal.

At the same time, that usurpation might not want the sanctions of religion, the court clergy were employed to aid these despotic proceedings, by preaching up the duty of passive obedience and the divine right of kings to govern without check or responsibility. Among these, one Dr. Sibthorp became distinguished by circumstances. Having preached on some public occasion, a sermon full of the court doctrine, he dedicated it to the king, and carried it to Archbishop Abbot to be licensed for the press. The good old primate, who was half a puritan and altogether a protestant, refused to sanction such doctrine, and was therefore suspended from the functions of his office, and compelled to retire in disgrace to a country residence. Another of these preachers, Dr. Manwaring, was distinguished still more, not only by the boldness with which he carried out his principles, but by the favor with which he was regarded by the court. In two sermons preached before the king, and published by the king's command, he taught among other matters as follows; "The king is not bound to observe the laws of the realm concerning the subject's rights and liberties, but his royal will and pleasure, in imposing taxes without consent of parliament, doth oblige the subjects conscience on pain of damnation." These were the doctrines which the dominant party in the church took pains to propagate in that day of usurpation and national danger.

While the nation was in this state of angry and growing excitement, the king,—as if a war with the house of Austria, which then governed both Spain and Germany, were not embarrassment enough,—engaged in a new war with France, merely to gratify the caprice and passion of his favorite. One expedition was fitted out under the command of Buckingham, which speedily terminated in disaster and shame. Nothing now remained for the baffled monarch, but to try once more the expedient of calling the great council of the kingdom.

The third parliament of this reign accordingly met in March 1628. At the opening of this parliament, the king, instead of making an acknowledgment of his past errors, or any promise of a more liberal and legal administration in future, boldly declared, as if the absolute

power at which he was aiming were already consolidated, that if they failed in their duty of providing for the necessities of the state, "he must, in discharge of his conscience, use those other means which God had put into his hands." And the same claims of power were advanced under his direction, in language still more direct and offensive, by some of his ministers. Thus evident was it that the king, nothing wiser by experience, was still bent on changing the constitution of the kingdom, and removing every limitation of his power. In these circumstances, the parliament conducted themselves with a deliberate and prudent firmness which deserves the highest admiration. They began by voting a supply, which Charles himself, moved to tears by a liberality almost unexpected, acknowledged to be ample; but they wisely refused to pass their vote into a law, till the king after much reluctance and many a pitiful evasion, had given his unqualified assent to a bill called the "petition of right," which they had framed with reference to the late arbitrary measures of the court, in the hope of securing in future the ancient privileges of Englishmen. But while Buckingham retained his ascendancy, they could feel no security. They went on with the investigation of abuses, and soon presented a remonstrance recapitulating the public grievances and national disasters of the reign, and ascribing them all to the mismanagement of Buckingham. As they were proceeding in another remonstrance, the session was suddenly closed by a prorogation.

In one particular, of no great moment in itself, but worthy to be noticed, on account of its significance, the court immediately after this prorogation showed its contempt for the voice of parliament, and its persevering and daring adherence to the principles of despotism. The lords, on the impeachment of the commons, had condemned Dr. Manwaring, for his sermons above mentioned, to be imprisoned during the pleasure of the house, to be fined a thousand pounds, to make submission and acknowledgment, to be suspended three years, and to be incapable of holding any ecclesiastical dignity, or secular office. As soon as the session was closed, the condemned criminal was not only pardoned by the king, but, as if he had earned a reward, was preferred to a valuable living, and a few years afterwards raised to a bishopric. About the same

time, Sibthorp received a similar reward ; and Montague, another preacher and author of the same school, who like Manwaring was under the censure of parliament, was elevated to a seat among the bishops. Demonstration was thus afforded, that the king after all his concessions, was still in principle a despot.

Not long after the prorogation of the parliament, all further proceedings against Buckingham, and all his schemes of mischief, were arrested by the dagger of an insane assassin. From this time the prime minister in church and state, was William Laud, then bishop of London, and soon afterwards archbishop of Canterbury.

When the parliament came together according to prorogation, early in the following year, (1629) they found new evidence of the king's unfaithfulness, evidence which must have wrought in many a mind the conviction that no confidence could be reposed in either his concessions or his promises. Not only had unauthorized taxes been levied, and illegal punishments been inflicted, as before, but the all-important petition of right, as published by authority, instead of bearing that unqualified royal assent which made it a law, had, annexed to it, only an evasive and unmeaning answer from the king, which the parliament had refused to acknowledge as satisfactory. By such treacheries, so weak, so profligate, so contemptible, did this ill-starred monarch forfeit the confidence of his people and make his own ruin inevitable. After all that had now been developed, what cordiality or co-operation could there be, between the king and the parliament. Whatever followed was only the necessary result of what had gone before. The king was determined, and so were the people. The king was determined to be independent and absolute. The people were determined to submit to no authority but that which was lawful. The result could not have been avoided but by the people's abandoning their rights, and lying down to be trodden into the earth by the iron hoof of usurpation, or by the king's abandoning his principles, and becoming, what so few kings have ever been, a plain and honest lover of his country.

A bill had been introduced into the house of commons, for granting to the king, what he had levied from the beginning of his reign without law and against many complaints both of par-

liament and of people, the customary taxes on commerce. But before passing the bill, the house, for the sake of securing an important principle, insisted that the unauthorized collection of this revenue should cease. This the king refused; and his custom-house officers proceeded with their collections. The officers were summoned to the bar of the house; but the king sent a message to the commons, implying that he was responsible for the acts complained of. The house were still bent on proceeding; but the speaker having received orders from the king, refused to put the question. A short protestation was framed and passed by acclamation, while the speaker was forcibly detained in the chair; and the house was then adjourned by the king's authority. Immediately afterwards the parliament was dissolved. And soon a proclamation was published, in which the king very clearly avowed his intention to have no more to do with parliaments for the present.

For the twelve succeeding years, Charles reigned, very much as he had always been trying to reign, the absolute monarch. Under this new constitution, as it might be called, the Council was the legislative, and the Star Chamber and High Commission were the most important branches of the judiciary. The king's proclamations and orders in council were the law of the land. By this authority, not only the ancient taxes of tonnage and poundage, against which parliament had protested, were continued, but new imposts were collected. Under the name of ship-money, direct taxes were levied for the support of the navy. Numerous and odious monopolies were erected; and other measures for providing a revenue were resorted to. For every disobedience to the law enacted at the council-table, the offender was liable to be tried before the same persons assembled in the star-chamber, and to be punished with fine, imprisonment, pillory, or mutilation, at the discretion of the court. The fines imposed by this court seem to have been no inconsiderable part of the ways and means. The high commission was an ecclesiastical court erected on the basis of the king's supremacy, which, contrary to acts of parliament and judicial sentences, had usurped the power of fining, imprisoning, and inflicting corporal punishment for ecclesiastical offenses. It was during this twelve years despotism that those Puritans fled from

England, who settled the New-England colonies. Four thousand persons became voluntary exiles, rather than submit to the system which then prevailed in the church and state. Some indication of the character and standing of these exiles is afforded by the fact that their removal is supposed to have drawn from the kingdom, money to the amount of four or five hundred thousand pounds.

All this apparatus of despotism was under the control of Laud; and he employed it all, with the zeal of a fanatic, to root out puritanism, and to promote those popish principles and practices, with which (though himself an enemy to the *court* of Rome) he was so enamored. The mind of Charles was one of that class to which such notions are most congenial. He verily thought, as Laud did, that a puritan was far worse than a papist; and that among all the errors of the church of Rome there was not one so deadly as the error of supposing that there might be a true church without prelates or priestly vestments, and without liturgy or pompous ceremonies. It was therefore no difficult matter for the primate to persuade the monarch that he would be doing God service by stretching his prerogative to introduce into Scotland, not only the entire hierarchy, but the liturgy and ceremonies of the church of England. The insane attempt roused that jealous and turbulent people to rebellion. A solemn covenant for mutual defence and support, and for the entire reformation of their national church from popery and prelacy, was subscribed with oaths by willing thousands, and proved a bond of union which all the art and power of the English court were unable to dissolve. The king having accumulated from the surplus of illegal taxation a treasure of two hundred thousand pounds, raised an army to reduce the covenanters to obedience. The queen at the same time made an appeal to the catholics of England for help in this emergency; and they came forward with abundant free will offerings, thus helping to fix the impression on the public mind that the question to be decided by arms, was in fact the question between protestantism on the one hand and a return to popery on the other.

One grand infirmity in Charles' character was an extreme obstinacy of purpose, conjoined with the utmost vacillation of conduct; and never perhaps was that infirmity more strikingly exhibited than

in his management at this crisis. The enterprise of forcing English uniformity on the presbyterians of Scotland, was one of which he might have said beforehand, "The attempt and not the deed confounds us;" and had he been endowed with the talent, as he was impelled by the spirit of usurpation, he would have seen that if once embarked on such a project, he had no alternative but success or ruin. Having made great preparation, he marched in person, at the head of a numerous army to the Scottish frontier. There, without hazarding a single action, he made a treaty with the covenanters, in which he yielded nearly every thing they could ask for; and at once disbanded his army. Then suddenly, when he began to feel the operation of his own concessions, he recommenced hostilities without an army and without the means of raising one, his last resources having been expended in the previous operations.

In these circumstances of weakness and humiliation, after eleven years of arbitrary government, he resolved on calling another parliament. But that there might be no opportunity to form complaints against his administration, he fixed the time of meeting just before the time for the opening of the campaign. The parliament however, when assembled, gave no heed to the king's urgency for an immediate supply of money; but proceeded, as formerly, to the consideration of the public grievances. After a few days debate they were dissolved without having done any thing; and the only result was that the necessities of the king were more embarrassing, and the excitement of the nation deeper and more alarming. The old course of illegal taxation and illegal punishment was pursued with renewed violence; and matters were fast ripening for civil war.

In this crisis it was that the convocation of the clergy, which according to immemorial custom had been in session during the session of parliament, continued its proceedings by a doubtful authority, and enacted a new body of "constitutions and canons ecclesiastical," the grand object of which was the more grievous oppression of the puritans. One of these canons made it the duty of every minister to read publicly, once in three months, a certain prescribed declaration of the divine institution of absolute monarchy. Another decreed not only excommunication, but a further

punishment in the star-chamber, against every person who should "import, print, or disperse" any book written against the discipline and government of the church of England. Another enjoined it on all public preachers to preach twice a year, "positively and plainly, that the rites and ceremonies of the church of England are lawful, and that it is the duty of all people to conform to them." But the most obnoxious of these canons, was that which prescribed an oath to be taken by all ecclesiastical persons, on pain first of suspension, and, after two months, of deprivation. Those who received this oath swore not only that they approved the doctrine, discipline, and government established in the church of England, but that they never would consent to any alteration. The design was, to cast out and silence every minister in the kingdom, who entertained any scruple in regard to the perfection of the church as it was then constituted and governed. But the mad zeal of those who framed and imposed this test defeated its own purpose, and strengthened instead of suppressing the cause of the puritans. One clause of the oath was as follows, "Nor will I give my consent to alter the government of this church by archbishops, bishops, deacons and archdeacons, etc. as it stands now established, and by right out to stand." From the *et cetera* in this clause, the oath was denominated the *Et cetera* oath. It wakened a new and earnest dispute throughout the kingdom; and many who had submitted, without scruple, to every previous exaction of the hierarchy, were roused to resistance by the attempt to force upon them an oath so sweeping in what it did express, and with an *et cetera* in the middle that might be made to mean any thing or every thing that had been left unexpressed.

It was not long after Baxter's settlement at Bridgenorth, that these canons were published. He speaks of the oath as having threatened his expulsion. It occasioned much debate among the ministers of that county, though as has been already stated, they were generally satisfied with conformity. A meeting of these ministers was held at Bridgenorth for consultation. The greater number were against the oath, and were resolved not to take it. Baxter was led by this debate to a new investigation of the whole subject

of episcopacy, and of the government of the English church. . He read several important works, on both sides of the question, which he had not seen before. The result of his inquiries was, that 'though he found not sufficient evidence to prove all episcopacy unlawful, yet he was much satisfied that the English diocesan frame was guilty of the corruption of churches and ministry, and of the ruin of the true church discipline.' A similar effect was produced on many other minds. Indeed so evidently unfavorable to the cause of prelacy, was the imposition of this oath, that, though the archbishop was disposed to press it to the utmost, the king soon gave order that there should be "no prosecution thereof till the next meeting of the convocation." Thus the matter was dropped ; and Baxter and a multitude of others similarly situated, were permitted still to preach the gospel.

He had hardly escaped from this danger, when another incident seemed likely to deprive him of the privilege of laboring as a minister of Christ. The earl of Bridgewater, Lord President of the marches of Wales, passed through Bridgenorth on his way to join the king in his expedition against the Scots ; and, arriving there on Saturday at evening, he was informed by some malicious persons, that both Mr. Baxter and Mr. Madstard his colleague, were guilty of non-conformity in respect to the sign of the cross and wearing the surplice, and that neither of them prayed against the Scots. The Lord President was a man having authority, and these were charges of no trivial guilt. He told the accusers he would himself attend church the next day, and see whether the ministers would do these things or not. Nothing was expected but that both would be deprived. But suddenly the Lord President changed his purpose and proceeded on his journey ; and the result was, the malice of the accusers was baffled.

The king's second expedition against the covenanters of Scotland was more disastrous than the first. His army, undisciplined and discontented, after one slight skirmish fled as in a panic from the Tweed to York ; and the Scots took possession of the three northern counties of England. Among the requests which the successful invaders sent to the king, addressing him in the most respectful language, and with many protestations of fidelity to his person,

was one that he would call an English parliament to settle the peace between the two kingdoms. All the desires and hopes of England were for a parliament. Twelve peers attending on the king at York, presented their petition that a parliament might be called. Another petition to the same effect, came from London. After a little more delay, in the vain hope of some change by which he might escape from what he so much feared and hated, he yielded to the dire necessity ; and to the universal joy of an oppressed and indignant nation, a parliament was summoned.

This assembly, celebrated in history as the Long Parliament, was opened November 3, 1640 ; and immediately proceeded with a high hand to the redress of grievances. Their confidence in the king was lost beyond recovery ; they believed the constitution of the kingdom to have been subverted ; and as they went on in the work of reformation, they insensibly came to consider themselves as bound not only to correct existing abuses, by strong, and if need be, violent measures, but also to limit the power of the monarch by new restraints, and to guard the liberties of the people against the possibility of future invasion. That the king had justly forfeited the confidence of his people ; and that his conduct, for at least twelve years, had betrayed a settled design to change the constitution, admits of no serious question. That there are cases of usurpation, in which the bonds of allegiance are dissolved, and the people are left to institute, in such manner as convenience dictates, new forms of government, is a maxim undisputed in modern politics. Whether the case in which the parliament now found themselves was one of this description ; whether the king's subversion of the old constitution justified them in irregularly framing a new one, is a question which still divides the opinions of the English people, and which it is no part of the design of this narrative to illustrate or decide.

At the very beginning of the session, the almost unanimous hostility of the members, against the administration in all its departments, discovered itself. The topics of complaint, both civil and ecclesiastical, were discussed in long and vehement speeches, many of which were published and eagerly read throughout the nation.

The principal advisers of the crown, especially Strafford and Laud, were impeached of high treason.

“The concord of this parliament consisted not in the unanimity of the persons, for they were of several tempers as to matters of religion, but in the complication of the interest of those causes which they severally did most concern themselves in.” For as the king’s illegal and violent proceedings in the state, had run parallel with Laud’s popish impositions on the church ; so “the parliament consisted of two sorts of men, who, by the conjunction of these causes, were united in their votes and endeavors for a reformation. One party made no great matter of these alterations in the church ; but they said if parliament were once down, and our propriety gone, and arbitrary government set up, and law subjected to the prince’s will, we were then all slaves ; and this they made a thing intolerable, for the remedying of which, they said, every true Englishman could think no price too dear. These the people called, ‘good commonwealth’s men.’ The other sort were the more religious men, who were also sensible of all these things, but were much more sensible of the interest of religion ; and these most inveighed against the innovations in the church, the bowing to altars, (enjoined and enforced by the prelates) the book for sports on Sundays, the casting out of ministers, the troubling of the people by the high-commission court, the pillorying and cutting off men’s ears for speaking against the bishops, the putting down lectures and afternoon sermons and expositions on the Lord’s days, with such other things, which they thought of greater weight than ship-money. But because these latter agreed with the former in the vindication of the people’s propriety and liberties, the former did the easilier concur with them against the proceedings of the bishops and high-commission court.”*

Petitions and complaints against arbitrary power in state and church, came in from every quarter. Many proceedings of the star-chamber and high-commission courts were revised and condemned by the house of commons. Individuals who had been fined immense sums, and pilloried, and mutilated, and condemned to perpetual imprisonment, were brought out from distant places of

* Narrative, Part I. p. 18.

confinement, and conducted to London with popular acclamations, and as in a triumphal procession. A bill of attainder was passed against Strafford, to which the king with much reluctance, and after some alarming demonstrations of the popular fury, at last gave his assent; and the blood of Charles' ablest, and with but one exception, most arbitrary minister was shed on the scaffold. At the same time the king assented to a bill which made the parliament incapable of dissolution, save by its own consent, thus changing at once the constitution of the government. The high-commission, star-chamber, and other arbitrary courts were soon afterwards abolished. Not many months elapsed before the bishops were deprived of their seats in the house of lords. Thus one encroachment after another was made on the royal power, the king meanwhile, as formerly, pursuing no uniform course of conduct, but acting now from fear and now from pride or anger, as one passion or another was excited by present circumstances. Mutual distrust and irritation proceeded; every preparation was gradually made by both parties, for an appeal to arms; and at last on the 22d of August 1642 the king set up his standard, and a civil war was begun.

But we have run before our narrative of Baxter's personal history. One of the measures of reform undertaken by the parliament, was the appointment of a committee to receive petitions and complaints against scandalous clergymen. As soon as this was known, petitions were brought forward from all quarters. At a later period, ministers were removed by parliament for political offences; but at the time now referred to, no encouragement was given for complaints against any minister except for insufficiency, false doctrine, illegal innovations, or scandal. The chairman of this committee published the names of a hundred of these ministers with their places and the articles proved against them, "where," says Baxter, "so much ignorance, insufficiency, drunkenness, filthiness, etc. was charged upon them, that many moderate men could have wished that their nakedness had been rather hid, and not exposed to the world's decision."

The inhabitants of Kidderminster in Worcestershire, following the example of other towns, prepared a petition against their ministers, the vicar and his two curates, all of whom were decidedly un-

qualified for the sacred office. The vicar, whose name was Dance, foreseeing how such a petition in relation to him would terminate, proposed a compromise with the people. By the mediation of Sir Henry Herbert, Baxter's old patron at Whitehall, then member of parliament, an agreement was finally made that the vicar should dismiss the curate who assisted him in the town, and should allow sixty pounds yearly to such preacher as a committee of fourteen named by the complainants should choose. The minister thus elected was not to be hindered from preaching at any time ; and the vicar was to read the common prayer, as usual, and to do whatever else was to be done. So the petition was withdrawn and the vicar kept his place, which, after the allowance stipulated for a preacher, was still worth two hundred pounds per annum.

To this place Baxter was invited on the 9th of March 1641. " My mind," he says, " was much to the place as soon as it was described to me ; because it was a full congregation, and most convenient temple ; an ignorant rude and reveling people for the greater part, who had need of preaching, and yet had among them a small company of converts, who were humble, godly, and of good conversation, and not much hated by the rest and therefore the fitter to assist their teacher ; but above all because they had hardly ever had any lively, serious preaching among them. For Bridgenorth had made me resolve that I would never more go among a people that had been hardened in unprofitableness under an awakening ministry ; but either to such as had never had any convincing preacher or to such as had profited by him. As soon as I came to Kidderminster, and had preached there one day, I was chosen, *nemine contradicente* ; for though fourteen only had the power of choosing, they desired to please the rest. And thus I was brought by the gracious providence of God to that place which had the chiefest of my labors, and yielded the greatest fruits of comfort. And I noted the mercy of God in this that I never went to any place in my life, among all my changes, which I had before desired, or thought of, much less sought ; but only to those that I never thought of till the sudden invitation did surprise me."

The sequel of his life will show in what manner and with what

success he labored in this place. At the beginning of his labors here, he found himself the object of much jealousy and hatred on the part of the ignorant rabble of the town. Some instances of their malice he records; the same idle ridicule, the same perverse misrepresentations, the same lying reports, with which drunkards and scorners are wont to assail serious and faithful ministers in these days, were employed against him. He lived, however, to see the party of the tippling and profane, very much diminished under his influence.

In connection with the commencement of his labors at Kidderminster, he adverts again to those bodily infirmities under which he had all along been suffering. These, he says, "were so great as made me live and preach in some continual expectation of death, supposing still that I had not long to live; and this I found through all my life to be an invaluable mercy to me: For,

"1. It greatly weakened temptations.

"2. It kept me in a great contempt of the world.

"3. It taught me highly to esteem of time; so that if any of it passed away in idleness or unprofitableness, it was so long a pain and burden to my mind. So that I must say to the praise of my most wise conductor, that time hath still seemed to me much more precious than gold or any earthly gain, and its minutes have not been despised, nor have I been much tempted to any of the sins which usually go by the name of pastime, since I understood my work.

"4. It made me study and preach things necessary, and a little stirred up my sluggish heart, to speak to sinners with some compassion, as a dying man to dying men.

"These, with the rest which I mentioned before when I spake of my infirmities, were the blessings which God afforded me by affliction. I humbly bless his gracious providence, who gave me his treasure in an earthen vessel, and trained me up in the school of affliction, and taught me the cross of Christ so soon."*

Amid these distresses of the body, the blessed effects of which, he acknowledged in his old age so gratefully, his mind was not

* Narrative, Part I. p. 21:

always free from even severe and painful conflicts. The trials of such a believer, and the processes by which his faith advanced toward perfection, are always instructive. The following record will not be read without interest. It was by such inward struggles, probably, that he acquired those clear and discriminating views of christian character, as well as christian truth, by which his writings are distinguished.

“ At one time above all the rest, being under a new and unusual distemper, which put me upon the present expectations of my change, and going for comfort to the promises as I was used, the tempter strongly assaulted my faith, and would have drawn me towards infidelity itself. Till I was ready to enter into the ministry, all my troubles had been raised, by the hardness of my heart, and the doubtings of my own sincerity ; but now all these began to vanish, and never much returned to this day ; and instead of these, I was now assaulted by more pernicious temptations ; especially to question the truth of the sacred scriptures, and also the life to come and immortality of the soul. And these temptations assaulted me not as they do the melancholy, with horrid vexing importunity ; but by pretence of sober reason, they would have drawn me to a settled doubting of christianity.

“ And here I found my own miscarriage and the great mercy of God. My miscarriage, in that I had so long neglected the well settling of my foundations, while I had bestowed so much time in the superstructures and the applicatory part. For having taken it for an intolerable evil, once to question the truth of the scriptures and the life to come, I had either taken it for a certainty upon trust, or taken up with common reasons of it, which I had never well considered, digested, or made mine own. Insomuch as when this temptation came, it seemed at first to answer and enervate all the former reasons of my feeble faith, which made me to take the scriptures for the word of God ; and it set before me such mountains of difficulty in the incarnation, the person of Christ, his undertaking and performance, with the scripture chronology, histories and style, etc. which had stalled and overwhelmed me, if God had not been my strength. And here I saw much of the mercy of God, that he let not out these terrible temptations upon me,

while I was weak and in the infancy of my faith ; for then I had never been able to withstand them. But faith is like a tree, whose top is small while the root is young and shallow : and therefore, as then it hath but small rooting, so is it not liable to the shaking winds and tempests, as the big and high-grown trees are : but as the top groweth higher, so the root at once grows greater, and deeper fixed, to cause it to endure its greater assault.

“ Though formerly I was wont when any such temptation came, to cast it aside, as fitter to be abhorred than considered of, yet now this would not give me satisfaction ; but I was fain to dig to the very foundations, and seriously to examine the reasons of christianity, and to give a hearing to all that could be said against it, that so my faith might be indeed my own. And at last I found that, *Nil tam certum quam quod ex dubio certum* ; nothing is so firmly believed as that which hath been sometime doubted of.

“ In the storm of this temptation, I questioned a while whether I were indeed a christian or an infidel, and whether faith could consist with such doubts as I was conscious of : for I had read in many papists and protestants, that faith had certainty and was more than an opinion ; and that if a man should live a godly life, from the bare apprehensions of the probability of the truth of scripture, and the life to come, it would not save him, as being no true godliness or faith. But my judgment closed with the reason of Dr. Jackson’s determination of this case, which supported me much, that as in the very assenting act of faith there may be such weakness, as may make us cry, “ Lord increase our faith ; we believe, Lord, help our unbelief ;” so when faith and unbelief are in their conflict, it is the effects which must show us which of them is victorious. And that he that hath so much faith, as will cause him to deny himself, take up his cross, and forsake all the profits, honors, and pleasures of this world, for the sake of Christ, the love of God, and the hope of glory, hath a saving faith, how weak soever ; for God cannot condemn the soul that truly loveth and seeketh him : and those that Christ bringeth to persevere in the love of God, he bringeth to salvation. And there were diverse things, that in this assault proved great assistance to my faith.

“ 1. That the being and attributes of God were so clear to me,

that he was to my intellect what the sun is to my eye, by which I see itself and all things. And he seemed mad to me, who questioned whether there were a God." "All the suppositions of the atheists, have ever since been so visibly foolish and shameful to my apprehension, that I scarce find a capacity in myself of doubting of them ; and whenever the tempter hath joined any thing of these with the rest of his temptations, the rest have been the easier overcome, because of the overwhelming evidences of a Deity which are always before the eyes of my soul.

"2. And it helped me much to discover that this God must needs be related to us as our owner, our governor, and our benefactor, in that he is related to us as our creator ; and that therefore we are related to him as his own, his subjects, and his beneficiaries ; which as they all proceed by undeniable resultancy from our creation and nature, so thence do our duties arise which belong to us in those relations, by as undeniable resultancy ; and that no show of reason can be brought by any infidel in the world to excuse the rational creature from loving his Maker, with all his heart and soul and might, and devoting himself and all his faculties to him from whom he did receive them, and making him his ultimate end who is his first efficient cause. So that godliness is a duty so undeniably required in the law of nature, and so discernible by reason itself, that nothing but unreasonableness can contradict it.

"3. And then it seemed utterly improbable to me that this God should see us to be losers by our love and duty to him, and that our duty should be made our snare, or make us the more miserable by how much the more faithfully we perform it. And I saw that the very possibility of a life to come would make it the duty of a reasonable creature to seek it though with the loss of all below.

"4. And I saw by undeniable experience, a strange universal enmity between the heavenly and the earthly mind, the godly and the wicked." "And I saw that the wicked and haters of godliness are so commonly the greatest and most powerful and numerous, as well as cruel, that ordinarily there is no living according to the precepts of nature and undeniable reason, without being made the derision and contempt of men."

"5. And then I saw that there is no other religion in the world,

which can stand in competition with christianity. Heathenism and Mohametanism are kept up by tyranny, and blush to stand at the bar of reason ; and Judaism is but christianity in the egg or bud ; and mere Deism, which is the most plausible competitor, is so turned out of almost the whole world, as if nature made its own confession, that without a Mediator it cannot come to God.

“ 6. And I perceived that all other religions leave the people in their worldly, sensual, and ungodly state.” “ And the nations where christianity is not, are drowned in ignorance and earthly mindedness, so as to be the shame of nature.

“ 7. And I saw that Christ did bring up all his serious and sincere disciples to real holiness and to heavenly mindedness, and made them new creatures, and set their hearts and designs and hopes on another life, and brought their senses into subjection to their reason, and taught them to resign themselves to God, and to love him above all the world. And it is not like that God will make use of a deceiver for this real visible recovery and reformation of the nature of man ; or that any thing but his own zeal can imprint his image.

“ 8. And here I saw an admirable suitableness in the office and design of Christ, to the ends of God, and the felicity of man ; and how excellently these supernatural revelations do fall in, and take their place in subserviency to natural verities ; and how wonderfully faith is fitted to bring men to the love of God, when it is nothing else but the beholding of his amiable attractive love and goodness in the face of Christ, and the promises of heaven, as in a glass, till we see his glory.

“ 9. And I had felt much of the power of his word and spirit on myself, doing that which reason now telleth me must be done. And shall I question my physician when he hath done so much of the cure, and recovered my depraved soul to God ?

“ 10. And as I saw these assistances to my faith, so I perceived that whatever the tempter had to say against it, was grounded on the advantages which he took from my ignorance, and my distance from the times and places of the matters of the sacred history, and such like things which every novice meeteth with in almost all other sciences at the first, and which wise, well-studied men can see through.

“ All these assistances were at hand before I came to the immediate evidences of credibility in the sacred oracles themselves. And when I set myself to search for those, I found more in the doctrine, the predictions, the miracles, than I ever before took notice of, which I shall not here so far digress as to set down, having partly done it in several treatises.”

“ From this assault, I was forced to take notice that it is our belief of the truth of the word of God and the life to come, which is the spring that sets all grace on work, and with which it rises or falls, flourishes or decays, is actuated or stands still; and that there is more of this secret unbelief at the root, than most of us are aware of; and that our love of the world, our boldness with sin, our neglect of duty, are caused hence. I observed easily in myself that if at any time Satan did, more than at other times, weaken my belief of scripture and the life to come, my zeal in religious duty abated with it, and I grew more indifferent in religion than before; I was more inclined to conformity in those points which I had taken to be sinful, and was ready to think, why should I be singular and offend the bishops and my superiors, and make myself contemptible in the world, and expose myself to censures, scorns and sufferings, and all for such little things as these, when the foundations have so great difficulties as I am unable to overcome? But when faith revived, then none of the parts or concernments of religion seemed small, and then man seemed nothing, and the world a shadow, and God was all.

“ In the beginning, I doubted not of the truth of the holy scriptures or of the life to come, because I saw not the difficulties which might cause doubting. After that, I saw them, and I doubted because I saw not that which should satisfy the mind against them. Since that, having seen both difficulties and evidences, though I am not so unmolested as at first, yet is my faith, I hope, much stronger, and far better able to repel the temptations of Satan and the sophisms of infidels than before. But yet it is my daily prayer, that God would increase my faith, and give my soul a clear sight of the evidences of his truth, and of himself, and of the invisible world.”*

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 21, 24.

It was a little more than a year after Baxter's coming to Kidderminster, when the war between the king and the parliament was fairly begun. In his own narrative, he describes much at length, the causes of the war, the character of the parties into which the nation was divided, and the progress of events. He was himself the sworn partizan of neither side ; his views were much more favorable to the doctrine of non-resistance, than were those of his friends ; and he ascribes the blame of the war to both parties. On the side of the parliament, he blames, first, the indiscretion and tumultuous proceedings of the people who adhered to them, particularly in London, where their zeal broke out in acts of violence. This, he attributes in a great measure to the bitter and angry spirit of a few, who were yet " enough to stir up the younger and unexperienced sort of religious people to speak too vehemently and intemperately against the bishops and the ceremonies, and to jeer and deride at the common prayer and all that was against their minds. For the young and raw sort of christians are usually prone to this kind of sin ; to be self-conceited, petulant, wilful, censorious, and injudicious in all their management of their differences in religion, and in all their attempts of reformation. Scorning and clamoring at that which they think evil, they usually judge a warrantable course. And it is hard finding any sort of people in the world, where many of the most unexperienced are not indiscreet, and proud, and passionate." This spirit among the people, he says, occasioned the riotous proceedings referred to ; and every such popular movement widened the breach and made the quarrel more desperate. " Thus rash attempts of headstrong people, do work against the good ends which they themselves intend ; and the zeal which hath censorious strife and envy, doth tend to confusion and every evil work : and **OVERDOING IS THE ORDINARY WAY OF UNDOING.**"*

Another thing on the side of the parliament, which hastened the war, and made it inevitable and irreconcilable, was the revolutionary spirit of some of the active members, who encouraged the disorders before mentioned, and were unwilling to rest at any point

*Narrative, Part I. pp. 26, 27.

short of the reduction of the whole system of church and state to their notions.

To these causes he adds another, "the great distrust which the parliament had of the king;" but though he mentions this in the catalogue of those particulars in which the parliament was blameworthy, he neglects to show how the blame of this distrust could be imputed either to the parliament or to the people. "They were confident," he says, and evidently they had good reason to be confident, "that the king was unmovable as to his judgment and affections; and that whatever he granted them, was but in design to get his advantage utterly to destroy them; and that he did but watch for such an opportunity. They supposed that he utterly abhorred the parliament and their actions; and therefore whatever he promised them, they believed him not, nor durst take his word; which they were hardened in by those former actions of his, which they called, the breach of his former promises."*

On the other side the quarrel was aggravated, and the war hastened, first by a plot, in which the king was involved, to bring the northern army to London, and thus to overawe and subdue the parliament; then by his undertaking to provide a guard, ostensibly for the protection, but really for the restraint, of the house of commons; next by the king's coming in person to the house, followed by an armed retinue, with the design of seizing five members whom he had accused of treason; afterwards by the rash movements of some of the king's friends; and more than all the rest, by the supposed connection between the court and the rebellion of the papists in Ireland, who had murdered two hundred thousand protestants in that kingdom, and to whom the English catholics, favored by the king, and known to be his zealous partizans in his whole controversy with the parliament, were looking with undisguised sympathy and with ardent hopes for their success.

These, Baxter regarded as the causes of mutual irritation, to which the commencement of hostilities might be directly ascribed.

In this contest, the great body of the nobility were on the king's side, especially after the war had actually begun. Not a few

* Narrative Part I. p. 27.

members of the house of commons left their seats when they saw that the ancient constitution of the kingdom was to be subverted. A great party of the knights and men of family, the extensive and hereditary landed proprietors, were with the king from the beginning ; and they with their tenantry constituted the strength of his cause. To these were added most of the lowest and poorest class of the people, the ignorant and vicious rabble every where. On the side of the parliament, were a few of the nobility, some in the highest rank ; and a very respectable minority of the country knights and gentlemen. But the chief strength of the parliament was in the middling classes, among the great body of the freeholders, and manufacturers, and merchants, the classes which since the era of the reformation had acquired wealth and intelligence, and a new importance in the nation.

In respect to religious principles and character, the parties differed more widely, and the line of division was more distinctly drawn, than in respect to rank. For “ though the public safety and liberty wrought very much with most, especially with the nobility and gentry, who adhered to the parliament, it was principally the differences about religious matters that filled up the parliament’s armies, and put the resolution and valor into their soldiers, which carried them on in another manner than mercenary soldiers are carried on. Not that the matter of bishops or no bishops, was the main thing, for thousands that wished for good bishops were on the parliament’s side.” “ But the generality of the people through the land, who were then called Puritans, Precisians, Religious persons, that used to talk of God, and heaven, and scripture, and holiness, and to follow sermons, and read books of devotion, and pray in their families, and spend the Lord’s day in religious exercises, and plead for mortification, and serious devotion, and strict obedience to God, and speak against swearing, cursing, drunkenness, profaneness, &c. ; I say the main body of this sort of men, both preachers and people, adhered to the parliament. And on the other side, the gentry that were not so precise and strict against an oath, or gaming, or plays, or drinking ; nor troubled themselves so much about the matters of God and the world to

come; and the ministers and people that were for the king's book,* for dancing and recreations on the Lord's days; and those that made not so great a matter of every sin, but went to church and heard common prayer, and were glad to hear a sermon which lashed the puritans; and who ordinarily spoke against this strictness and preciseness in religion, and this strict observation of the Lord's day, and following sermons, and praying extempore, and talking so much of scripture and the matters of salvation; and those that hated and derided them that take these courses;—the main body of these were against the parliament. Not but that some such, for money, or a landlord's pleasure, served them; as some few of the stricter sort were against them, or not for them; but I speak of the notable division through the land.

“If you ask how this came to pass, it requireth a longer answer than I think fit here to give. But briefly; actions spring from natural dispositions and interest. There is somewhat in the nature of all worldly men which makes them earnestly desirous of riches and honors in the world. They that value these things most will seek them; and they that seek them are more likely to find them than those that despise them. He who takes the world and preferment for his interest, will estimate and choose all means accordingly; and, where the world predominates, gain goes for godliness, and serious religion which would mortify their sin, is their

* The “book of sports,” frequently spoken of in the history of those times, was a royal proclamation, first drawn up by bishop Morton, and published by James I. in the year 1618, and afterwards at the instigation of arch-bishop Laud republished by Charles I. in the year 1633. The design of this proclamation was to express his majesty's pleasure “that after the end of divine service his good people should not be disturbed, letted or discouraged from any lawful recreations, such as *dancing*, either of men or women, *archery* for men, *leaping*, *vaulting*, or any such harmless recreations, nor from having *may-games*, *whitson-ales*, or *morrice-dances*, or setting up of *may-poles*, or other sports therewith used, so as the same may be had in due and convenient time without impediment or let of divine service.” When this proclamation was renewed by King Charles, it was ordered to be read in all the churches. Many of the ministers refused to comply with this order, some of whom were suspended for their disobedience. Others, after publishing the king's decree, immediately read the fourth commandment, adding *This is the law of God, the other the injunction of man*.

greatest enemy. Yet, conscience must be quieted, and reputation preserved ; which cannot be done without some religion. Therefore, such a religion is necessary to them, as is consistent with a worldly mind : which outside formality, lip service, and hypocrisy, are ; but seriousness, sincerity, and spirituality, are not. On the other side, there is that in the new nature of a believer, which inclineth him to things above, and causeth him to look at worldly grandeur and riches as things more dangerous than desirable. He is dead to the world, and the world to him, by the cross of Christ. No wonder, therefore, if few such attain great matters in the world, or ever come to preferment or greatness on earth. And there is somewhat in them which maketh them more fearful of displeasing God than all the world, and will not give them leave to stretch their consciences, or turn aside when the interest or the will of man requireth it. And the laws of Christ, to which they are so devoted, are of such a stream as cannot suit with carnal interest. There is a universal and radicated enmity between the carnal and the spiritual. This enmity is found in England, as well as in other countries between the godly and the worldly minds." "The vulgar rabble of the carnal and profane, did every where hate them that reproved their sin, and condemned them by a holy life." "The vicious multitude of the ungodly called all Puritans that were strict and serious in a holy life, were they ever so conformable. So the same name in a bishop's mouth signified a non-conformist, and in an ignorant drunkard's or swearer's mouth, a godly obedient christian." "Now the ignorant rabble, hearing that the bishops were against the Puritans, not having wit enough to know whom they meant, were emboldened the more against all those whom they called Puritans themselves ; and their rage against the godly was increased ; and they cried up the bishops, partly because they were against the Puritans, and partly because they were earnest for that way of worship which they found most consistent with their ignorance, carelessness, and sins. And thus the interest of the diocesans, and of the profane and ignorant sort of people, were unhappily twisted together in England."*

It is unnecessary to say on which side Baxter was enlisted.

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 31, 33.

PART SECOND.

THE point at which the king ventured to make a stand against the claims of the parliament, was when they demanded of him that the militia of the kingdom should be put under the command of men in whom they could confide, and whom they might nominate. This was in their view essential to their personal safety, and equally essential to secure the execution of the laws and the liberties of the people. After some delay and some proposals for a compromise, the king, having in the mean time removed from London, sent them a flat refusal. The two houses proceeded to form and publish an ordinance, in which they named lieutenants for the counties, conferring on them the command of the militia, and of all the guards, garrisons, and forts of the kingdom. These lieutenants were to obey the orders of the king signified by the two houses of parliament. On the other hand the king, taking advantage of an old statute, issued his commissions of array, appointing men of his own choice in the several counties to array, muster, and train the people. The date of the ordinance of parliament, was March 5th, but no attempt was made to execute either that or the king's commissions, till three months afterwards, or about two months before the formal declaration of war. The setting up of these clashing authorities was attended with some skirmishes in places where there was something like a balance of strength between the two parties. But generally, where the people had, with a decided majority, espoused the cause of parliament, the militia acknowledged the authority of their ordinance; and where the majority were for the king, the commissions of array were put in execution.

That part of the country in which Baxter, resided, including

the three adjacent counties of Shropshire, Worcester, and Herefordshire, was so generally devoted to the king that there was no public movement in behalf of the parliament. And as these preparations for war went forward, it became necessary for him to retreat from a scene of so much danger to those of his known character and principles. Some apprehension of the fury of the times may be gathered more easily from a few particular incidents described in his own language, than from any more general statements.

“About that time, the parliament sent down an order for the demolishing of all statues and images of any of the three persons in the blessed Trinity, or of the virgin Mary, which should be found in churches, or on the crosses in church-yards. My judgment was for the obeying of this order, thinking it came from just authority ; but I meddled not in it, but left the church-warden to do what he thought good. The church-warden, an honest, sober, quiet man, seeing a crucifix upon the cross in the church-yard, set up a ladder to have reached it, but it proved too short. While he was gone to seek another, a crew of the drunken, riotous party of the town, took the alarm, and run together with weapons to defend the crucifix and the church images, of which there were divers left since the time of popery. The report was among them that I was the actor, and it was me they sought ; but I was walking almost a mile out of town, or else I suppose I had there ended my days. When they missed me and the church-warden both, they went raving about the streets to seek us. Two neighbors that dwelt in other parishes, hearing that they sought my life, ran in among them to see whether I were there ; and they knocked them both down in the streets, and both of them are since dead, and I think never perfectly recovered that hurt. When they had foamed about half an hour, and met with none of us, and were newly housed, I came in from my walk, and hearing the people cursing me at their doors, I wondered what the matter was, but quickly found how I had escaped. The next Lord’s day, I dealt plainly with them, and laid open to them the quality of that action, and told them seeing they so requited me as to seek my blood, I was willing to leave them, and save them from that guilt. But the poor sots were so

amazed and ashamed, that they took on sorrily, and were loth to part with me.

“ About this time, the king’s declarations were read in our market-place, and the reader, a violent country gentleman, seeing me pass the streets, stopped and said, ‘ There goeth a traitor.’

“ And the commission of array was set afoot ; for the parliament meddled not with the militia of that county, the Lord Howard their lieutenant not appearing. Then the rage of the rioters grew greater than before. And in preparation to the war, they had got the word among them, ‘ Down with the round heads ;’ in-somuch that if a stranger passed in many places, that had short hair and a civil habit, the rabble presently cried, ‘ Down with the round-heads,’ and some they knocked down in the open streets.

“ In this fury of the rabble, I was advised to withdraw a while from home ; whereupon I went to Gloucester. As I passed but through a corner of the suburbs of Worcester, they that knew me not, cried, ‘ Down with the round-heads ;’ and I was glad to spur on to be gone. But when I came to Gloucester, among strangers also that had never known me, I found a civil, courteous, and religious people, as different from Worcester as if they had lived under another government.”*

The county of Gloucestershire was as unanimous for the cause of the parliament, as Worcester was for the cause of the king. But Baxter saw in the religious aspect of Gloucester, during his short residence there, the beginnings of a spirit of division and sectarianism, which afterwards produced in that city the most unhappy effects. First there were a few Baptists, who, laboring to draw disciples after them, occasioned an undesirable controversy. Then came a good man, zealous for Independency, who formed another separating party. Afterwards, Antinomianism was introduced. And by such means the solid piety of the place was dwindled and withered away.

After he had been at Gloucester about a month, some of his friends came to him from Kidderminster, inviting him to return. Their argument was, that the people would be sure to put the most

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 40, 41.

unfavorable construction on his continued absence. So, in the hope of retaining his influence and prolonging his usefulness, even in those stormy times, he went again to his work.

“When I came home,” he says, “I found the beggarly drunken rout in a very tumultuating disposition; and the superiors that were for the king did animate them; and the people of the place who were accounted religious, were called round-heads, and openly reviled, and threatened as the king’s enemies, though they had never meddled in any cause against the king. Every drunken sot that met any of them in the streets, would tell them, ‘We shall take an order with the Puritans ere long.’ And just as at their shows, and wakes, and stage-plays, when the drink and the spirit of riot did work together in their heads, and the crowd encouraged one another, so it was with them now: they were like tied mastiffs newly loosed, and flew in the face of all that was religious, yea or civil, which came in their way.” “Yet after the Lord’s day, when they heard the sermon, they would a while be calmed, till they came to the alehouse again, or heard any of their leaders hiss them on, or heard a rabble cry, ‘Down with the round-heads.’ When the wars began, almost all these drunkards went into the king’s army, and were quickly killed, so that scarce a man of them came home again and survived the war.”*

The war which had been opened a few weeks, was now actively carried on in Baxter’s immediate vicinity. The army of the king commanded by his nephew, Prince Rupert, and that of the parliament commanded by the Earl of Essex, met in the county of Worcester; and the first considerable battle in that long contest, the battle of Edghill, was fought on a Lord’s day (October 23d,) within Baxter’s hearing while he was preaching in the pulpit of a friend at Alcester, a few miles distant from the scene of conflict.

In such circumstances, he felt that the peaceful prosecution of his work at Kidderminster was not to be thought of. “For myself,” he says, “I knew not what course to take. To live at home, I was uneasy; but especially now, when soldiers on one side or other would be frequently among us, and we must still be at the

* Narrative, Part I. p. 42.

mercy of every furious beast that would make a prey of us. I had neither money nor friends : I knew not who would receive me in any place of safety ; nor had I any thing to satisfy them for my diet and entertainment. Hereupon I was persuaded, by one that was with me, to go to Coventry, where an old acquaintance, Mr. Simon King, was minister ; so thither I went, with a purpose to stay there till one side or other had got the victory, and the war was ended, and then to return home again : for so wise in matters of war was I, and all the country beside, that we commonly supposed that a very few days or weeks, by one or other battle, would end the wars ; and I believe that no small number of the parliament men, had no more wit than to think so too. Here I stayed at Mr. King's a month ; but the war was then as far from being likely to end as before.

“ While I was thinking what course to take in this necessity, the committee and governor of the city desired me to stay with them, and lodge in the governor's house, and preach to the soldiers. The offer suited well with my necessities ; but I resolved that I would not be chaplain to a regiment, nor take a commission : yet, if the mere preaching of a sermon once or twice a week to the garrison would satisfy them, I would accept of the offer, till I could go home again. Here, accordingly, I lived in the governor's house, and followed my studies as quietly as in a time of peace, for about a year ; preaching once a week to the soldiers, and once, on the Lord's day, to the people ; taking nothing from either but my diet.”*

Meanwhile the war, instead of being brought to a conclusion, was spreading its horrors over the whole land. A few counties were so decidedly for the parliament, and a few others so decidedly for the king, that they enjoyed comparative rest ; elsewhere every man's hand was against his neighbor. Indeed in all places where the parliament had not the ascendancy, there was no security to the country, “ the multitude did what they list.” “ If any one was noted for a strict and famous preacher, or for a man of precise and pious life, he was either plundered, or abused and in danger of his life. If a man did but pray in his family or were but heard repeat

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 43, 44.

a sermon, or sing a psalm, they presently cried out, *rebels, round-heads*; and all their money and goods that were portable proved guilty, how innocent soever they were themselves." This it was that filled the armies and garrisons of the parliament with sober pious men. "Thus when I was at Coventry, the religious part of my neighbors at Kidderminster, that would fain have lived quietly at home, were forced (the chiefest of them) to be gone. And to Coventry they came; and some of them that had any estates of their own, lived there on their own charge; and the rest were fain to take up arms and be garrison soldiers, to get them bread."

Under such persecutions Baxter's father in Shropshire, and all his neighbors that were noted for praying, and hearing sermons, were afflicted. In the hope of rendering some aid to his father, he was induced to leave Coventry for a few weeks, in company with a party who went to fortify and garrison one of the towns in that county. There he saw some fighting, such as was then going on almost every where. His father he found in prison at Lillshul. Having relieved him, he returned to Coventry after two months absence. There he settled again in his old habitation and employment, and followed his studies in quietness another year.

At Coventry, he says he had a very judicious auditory, and he records the names of many whom he regarded with particular affection. There were also in that place during the period of his residence there, about thirty worthy ministers who, like him, had fled thither for safety from the soldiers and from popular fury. "I have cause," he adds, "of continual thankfulness to God for the quietness and safety, and sober wise, religious company, with liberty to preach the gospel, which he vouchsafed me in this city, when other places were in the terrors and flames of war."

The garrison to which he was chaplain, he describes as a community in which there was much of the spirit of devotion, and at the same time no inconsiderable degree of intelligence on religious subjects. Some men of sectarian principles and of a dividing disposition, gave him plenty of employment. He says he "preached over all the controversies against the anabaptists first, and then against the separatists." The Baptists, determined not to be put down by his learning and acuteness, sent abroad for a minister of

their persuasion, who was no contemptible scholar; and with him Baxter held a disputation, first by word of mouth, and afterwards in writing. The result was that a few of the townsmen became Baptists, and a Baptist church was then planted in that city which continues to this day.* The garrison however, and the rest of the city "were kept sound."

The two years which Baxter spent at Gloucester, were years of convulsion and blood throughout England. The detail of battles, and sieges, and occasional attempts at pacification, is no part of our design. Every part of the kingdom being in arms, the war was carried on with various success, and with little progress towards a conclusion; and at the close of the first year, there was more prospect of a long continued conflict than at the beginning. At this time, the parliament, somewhat disheartened perhaps by the recent successes of the royal forces, invited aid from Scotland. The Scots, inflamed with zeal for the divine right of their presbyterian church government, insisted on a uniformity of doctrine, worship, and discipline in the two kingdoms, as the condition on which their assistance was to be afforded. A solemn league and covenant for the extirpation of popery, prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, and profaneness, was framed in Scotland, and after having undergone some amendments designed to make it somewhat more equivocal in its construction, was with great solemnity adopted and subscribed by both houses of parliament, and by the assembly of divines then sitting at Westminster. This covenant was ordered to be sworn to and subscribed by all persons over the age of eighteen years, throughout the kingdom.

From about this time, parties began to be distinctly formed both in the parliament and among its adherents. Heretofore all had been united in the common cause of reforming the existing hierarchy. What ecclesiastical system should take the place of that which they proposed to overturn, had not been discussed, much less determined. Many, perhaps the majority of sober men, were for a moderate, or as they styled it, a primitive episcopacy. Others preferred the platform of Geneva and of the churches of Holland, which

* Orme.

had been adopted with only slight modifications in Scotland. Others disapproving of all national and provincial churches, favored the scheme on which the churches of New-England had been formed ; and these, deeming no act of parliament necessary to give them authority, gathered separate churches as they had opportunity, on the congregational plan. But now the zeal of the Scots for their presbyterianism, and their intrigues to introduce their uniformity, into the sister kingdom, divided those who had been hitherto agreed ; and this was the rock on which was wrecked the cause of civil and religious liberty in England.

Cotemporaneously with this division of opinions in relation to ecclesiastical polity, there was drawn, insensibly, between the same parties, another line of distinction which related to the conduct and the expected conclusion of the war. The Presbyterians, seem to have calculated on the continuance of the kingly name and something of the kingly power : their plan was to establish their favorite uniformity, and to secure it, as had already been done in Scotland, before entering into any final agreement with the king. To this party naturally adhered all those men of moderate feelings and principles, who hoped for a reconciliation. The Independents, on the other hand, saw clearly that Charles could never be trusted ; they had no expectation that he could be brought to approve their scheme for the entire disjunction of church and state, and for the establishment of entire religious liberty ; and they thought that if it was lawful to carry on war against the king, it was equally lawful to conquer him, and that if the nation had been reduced to anarchy by his forfeiture of the trust reposed in him, the nation was in circumstances which justified the adoption of another and a better form of government. With them were of course allied that class of men, who were in love with the abstract rights of the people, and who desired to see the throne and the aristocracy both giving way to the fairer institutions of a republic.

The assembly of divines at Westminster has already been referred to ; and as that body is hardly less famous in the history of those times than the parliament itself, some notice of its constitution and character, will not be irrelevant in this place. The Westminster Assembly was not a national synod or convocation,

nor did it pretend to represent at all either the churches or the ministers. It consisted of one hundred and twenty-one divines, with thirty lay-assessors, called together by parliament to give advice on such questions as might be referred to them by the houses; and to questions thus referred, all their debates and proceedings were expressly confined, by the parliamentary ordinance which brought them together. "The divines there congregated," says Baxter, "were men of eminent learning, godliness, ministerial abilities, and fidelity: and being not worthy to be one of them myself, I may the more freely speak that truth which I know, even in the face of malice and envy, that as far as I am able to judge by the information of all history of that kind, and by any other evidences left us, the christian world since the days of the apostles, had never a Synod of more excellent divines, taking one thing with another, than this and the Synod of Dort."

The assembly was composed chiefly of those ministers who, like Baxter, retaining their connection with the church of England, were known to favor the cause of the parliament against the King, and to desire a thorough reformation. Several of the most learned Episcopal divines, some of them prelates, among whom was the Irish primate archbishop Usher, were chosen as members; but the King having declared himself against the assembly they refused to take their seats. A few of that party however came; but their leader Dr. Featly was after a while detected in a correspondence with the King, and for that offence was imprisoned. And that all sides might be heard, six or seven Independents were added, five of whom took an active part in the proceedings of the assembly, and were known as the "dissenting brethren." "These," Baxter says, "joined with the rest till they had drawn up a confession of faith, and a larger and a shorter catechism. But when they came to church government, they engaged them in many long debates, and kept that business, as long as possibly they could, undetermined. And after that, they kept it so long unexecuted in almost all parts of the land, saving London and Lancashire, that their party had time to strengthen themselves in the army and the parliament, and hinder the execution after all, and keep the government determined on, a stranger to most of

the people of this land, who knew it but by hear-say, as it was represented by reporters."

This view of the influence of the five dissenting brethren in the Westminster Assembly, seems to be somewhat extravagant. The fact was, the Scots were carried away with the hope of reducing England and Ireland, by law and conquest, to a uniformity of religion with them; and their partizans in the assembly and parliament, and among the clergy, soon caught from the covenant the same spirit. Great mistakes as to the nature of church government, and as to the authority of civil magistrates in matters of religion, were widely prevalent. Some politicians, and they had able divines to support them, held that there ought to be no church government, no power to debar from church privileges and ordinances, but in the hands or under the control of the civil magistrate. These were called Erastians. Others held that the church was independent of the State; but with this vital truth they held the miserable error, that the magistrate is bound to sustain the church, and to enforce uniform obedience to what the church decides. This was the doctrine of the Presbyterians as a party. They claimed that Christ had established in and over his church a government entirely distinct from the civil magistracy, that this government was none other than that by parochial sessions, classical presbyteries, provincial synods, and national assemblies; and that the government of the commonwealth was bound to support this system in the church, and to make all men respect and obey the decrees of this spiritual authority. The Independents took a different ground. They believed, indeed, that the power of admission to church privileges and of exclusion from ordinances, was independent of the civil government; but they believed that this power resided, both by a right resting on the principles of common sense, and by a right resting on divine authority, in the officers and members of each particular church, and there only. They had seceded from the church of England; and had assumed their natural liberty of forming churches and worshipping God according to their own views of propriety, without asking leave of the government; and they had engaged in this war for the vindication of what they supposed to be their natural liberty.

In opposition therefore not only to the prelatical party, but to the Presbyterians, and the Erastians, they were for a toleration ; and while it does not appear that they were, as a body, unwilling to have any public provision for the support of religious instruction, they were zealous for an entire separation between Church and State.

The Presbyterians had a numerical majority in parliament, and a still stronger majority in the assembly of divines ; for on almost every question between them and the Independents, all who were for a church establishment, all who believed it to belong to the magistrate to interfere with his authority in matters of religion, and all who deemed uniformity in doctrine discipline and worship, an object of supreme importance, acted with that party. The Independents however had on their side some of the most active, adroit and efficient men in parliament ; they had a plain and popular cause ; and they had as their natural allies, the Baptists and the numerous minor sects which were beginning to spring up from the chaotic and fermenting elements. With these advantages they were able at first to hinder and embarrass, and at last to defeat, the scheme of Presbyterian uniformity.

In the army especially, the cause of the Independents made rapid progress. The soldiers had been all along fighting, as they supposed, against unwarrantable impositions on the conscience ; and when they found that they had fought down one hierarchy, only that the parliament and the assembly of divines might set up another, they began to entertain a not unreasonable dissatisfaction. Nor was the nation at large long indifferent to these considerations. Thousands began to see that, as Milton phrased it,

“ New presbyter is but old priest writ large ; ”

and with Milton they were ready to cry out,

“ Because you have thrown off your prelate lord,
And with stiff vows renounced his liturgy,
Dare ye for this adjure the civil sword
To force our consciences that Christ set free,
And ride us with a classic hierarchy ? ”

It was such causes as these, rather than the simple efforts of the

five dissenting brethren in the assembly, which kept the presbyterian scheme of church government "so long unexecuted in almost all parts of the land," and which "hindered the execution of it after all."

Toward the close of Baxter's second year at Coventry, an important change took place in the army. The earl of Essex had heretofore been commander in chief for the parliament. But about this time there began to be dissatisfaction both with him and with the armies which he commanded. Men who had looked into the tendency and probable results of the existing state of things, and who judged that the safest way was to make thorough work, and to conclude the war by victory, saw that Essex and some other leaders in the army were of a different judgment. It appeared that the generals, even when putting the battle in array against the king, were unwilling to conquer him; and the complaint was made that on some occasions when an active pursuit might have finished the war, the king and his forces were suffered to escape. Yet Essex was a man in great esteem with the parliament and with the people, as well as with the army, and deservedly honored, both for his military qualities and for his noble integrity of character. And indeed there were many, who, fearing what might be attempted by the ambitious and the turbulent, desired a peace with the king on the basis of mutual accommodation, rather than a complete triumph over him reducing him to unqualified submission. All this made it the more difficult for those who favored more decisive measures, to bring about the changes which they desired.

Other complaints were made against the army as then constituted. "Though none could deny that the earl was a person of great honor, valor and sincerity, yet some did accuse the soldiers under him of being too like the king's soldiers in profaneness, lewd and vicious practices, and rudeness of carriage toward the country; and it was withal urged that the revolt of" several officers who, since the commencement of the war had gone over to the king, "was a satisfying evidence that the irreligious sort of men were not to be much trusted, but might easily by money, be hired to betray them."* At the same time it appeared that Cromwell's

* Narrative, Part I. p. 47.

troops, enlisted by him, and trained under his eye from the beginning of the war, and every where known as strictly religious men, had become the most efficient portion of the army, and were most to be depended on for discipline and order in the camp, and for valor in the field of battle. These things made the religious sort of men in parliament, in the army, and in the country, desirous of a thorough change in the organization of the army, "putting out the loose sort of men, especially officers, and putting religious men in their steads."

To effect so great a change without mutiny or serious dissatisfaction, was a problem not easily solved. All was accomplished however, without any difficulty, by a single vote of parliament. An ordinance was framed, afterwards known as the "self-denying ordinance," by which, all members of either house were excluded from almost every office, civil or military, during the war. For this measure so many reasons were alleged, that after a few day's debate, it passed without any formidable opposition. Nearly all the principal officers of the army immediately sent in their commissions. Fairfax, a man of good military talents, and of great integrity of character, but without the ambition or the peculiar skill to be a leader in such times, was made commander-in-chief; and at his request, Cromwell was exempted from the operation of the self-denying ordinance, and was made lieutenant-general. The master genius of Cromwell gave him a great ascendancy over his nominal superior; and the army was soon entirely re-organized under his supervision, and very much according to the wishes of the Independents, though Fairfax himself was a devoted Presbyterian. No sooner had the new-modeled army taken the field, than the effect of these new counsels and commands was evident. The first engagement of this army with the royal forces was the decisive battle of Naseby.

In this army Baxter became a chaplain. His views in entering the army, and his employment and efforts while there, were highly characteristic of the man in all his peculiarities. His account however, of Cromwell, and of the spirit which prevailed in the army, should be read with some allowance for the influence of prejudices which, even in his old age, had not forsaken him, and of

disappointments which, in all his latter years especially, he had much reason to remember.

“Naseby being not far from Coventry, where I was, and the noise of the victory being loud in our ears, and I having two or three that had been my intimate friends, in Cromwell’s army, whom I had not seen for above two years, I was desirous to see whether they were dead or alive; so to Naseby Field I went two days after the fight, and thence by the army’s quarters before Leicester, to seek my acquaintance. When I found them, I staid with them a night; and I understood the state of the army much better than ever I had done before. We that lived quietly in Coventry did keep to our old principles, and thought all others had done so too, except a very few inconsiderable persons. We were unfeignedly for king and parliament; we believed that the war was only to save the parliament and kingdom from papists and delinquents, and to remove the dividers, that the king might again return to his parliament; and that no changes might be made in religion, but by the laws which had his free consent. We took the true happiness of king and people, church and state, to be our end, and so we understood the covenant, engaging both against Papists and schismatics; and when the Court News-book told the world of the swarms of Anabaptists in our armies, we thought it had been a mere lie, because it was not so with us, nor in any of the garrison or county forces about us. But when I came to the army, among Cromwell’s soldiers, I found a new face of things which I never dreamt of; I heard the plotting heads very hot upon that which intimated their intention to subvert both church and state.”

“Abundance of the common troopers, and many of the officers, I found to be honest, sober, orthodox men; and others tractable, ready to hear the truth, and of upright intentions. But a few proud, self-conceited, hot-headed sectaries had got into the highest places, and were Cromwell’s chief favorites; and by their very heat and activity, bore down the rest, or carried them along with them. These were the soul of the army, though much fewer in number than the rest, being indeed not one to twenty throughout the army; their strength being in the General’s, in Whalley’s and in Rich’s regiments of horse, and among the new-placed officers in many of the rest.

“ I perceived that they took the king for a tyrant and an enemy, and really intended absolutely to master him or to ruin him. They thought if they might fight against him, they might also kill or conquer him ; and if they might conquer, they were never more to trust him further than he was in their power. They thought it folly to irritate him either by wars or contradictions in parliament, if so be they must needs take him for their king, and trust him with their lives when they had thus displeased him. They said, ‘ What were the lords of England, but William the Conqueror’s colonels ; or the barons, but his majors ; or the knights, but his captains ! ’ They plainly showed that they thought God’s providence would cast the trust of religion and the kingdom upon them as conquerors ; they made nothing of all the most wise and godly in the armies and garrisons, that were not of their way. *Per fas aut nefas*, by law or without it, they were resolved to take down not only bishops, and liturgy, and ceremonies, but all that did withstand their way. They were far from thinking of a moderate episcopacy, or of any healing way between the episcopalians and the presbyterians ; they most honored the separatists, anabaptists, and antinomians ; but Cromwell and his council took on them to join themselves to no party, but to be for the liberty of all. Two sorts, I perceived, they did so commonly and bitterly speak against, that it was done in mere design, to make them odious to the soldiers, and to all the land ; and these were first, the Scots, and with them all presbyterians, but especially the ministers ; whom they called ‘ priests,’ and ‘ priestbyters,’ ‘ dryvines,’ and ‘ the dissemblymen,’ and such like : secondly, the committees of the several counties, and all the soldiers that were under them, that were not of their mind and way. Some orthodox captains of the army did partly acquaint me with all this, and I heard much of it from the mouths of the leading sectaries themselves. This struck me to the heart, and made me fear that England was lost by those that it had taken for its chief friends.

“ Upon this I began to blame other ministers and myself. I saw that it was the ministers that had lost all, by forsaking the army, and betaking themselves to an easier and quieter way of life. When the earl of Essex went out first, each regiment had an able preacher ; but at Edghill fight, almost all of them went home ; and

as the sectaries increased, they were more averse to go into the army. It is true I believe now, that they had little invitation; and it is true, that they could look for but little welcome, and great contempt and opposition, beside all other difficulties and dangers; but it is as true, that their worth and labor, in a patient, self-denying way, would probably have preserved most of the army, and defeated the contrivances of the sectaries, saved the king, the parliament and the land. And if it had brought reproach upon themselves from the malicious, who called them *Military Levites*, the good which they had done would have wiped off that blot, much better than the contrary course would have done.

“I reprehended myself also, who had before rejected an invitation from Cromwell. When he lay at Cambridge long before, with that famous troop which he began his army with, his officers purposed to make their troop a gathered church, and they all subscribed an invitation to me to be their pastor, and sent it me to Coventry. I sent them a denial, reproving their attempt, and told them wherein my judgment was against the lawfulness and convenience of their way, and so I heard no more from them; and afterwards meeting Cromwell at Leicester, he expostulated with me for denying them. These very men that then invited me to be their pastor, were the men that afterwards headed much of the army, and some of them were the forwardest in all our changes; which made me wish that I had gone among them, however it had been interpreted; for then all the fire was in one spark.

“When I had informed myself, to my sorrow, of the state of the army, Captain Evanson, (one of my orthodox informers,) desired me yet to come to their regiment, which was the most religious, most valiant, most successful of all the army; but in as much danger as any one whatsoever. I was unwilling to leave my studies, and friends, and quietness, at Coventry, to go into an army so contrary to my judgment; but I thought the public good commanded me, and so I gave him some encouragement. Whereupon he told his colonel (Whalley,*) who also was orthodox in religion,

* This Whalley is the man who many years afterwards, with his son-in-law, Goffe, found refuge from the vengeance of the English Court among

but engaged by kindred and interest to Cromwell. He invited me to be chaplain to his regiment, and I told him I would take but one day's time to deliberate, and would send him an answer or else come to him.

“As soon as I came home to Coventry, I called together an assembly of ministers; Dr. Bryan, Dr. Grew, and many others. I told them the sad news of the corruption of the army, and that I thought all we had valued was likely to be endangered by them; seeing this army having first conquered at York, and now at Naseby, and having left the king no visible army but Goring's, the fate of the whole kingdom was likely to follow the disposition and interest of the conquerors. We have sworn to be true to the king and his heirs, in the oath of allegiance. All our soldiers here do think that the parliament is faithful to the king, and have no other purpose themselves. If king and parliament, church and state, be ruined by those men, and we look on and do nothing to hinder it, how are we true to our allegiance and to the covenant, which bindeth us to defend the king, and to be against schism, as well as against Popery and profaneness? For my part, said I, I know that my body is so weak that it is likely to hazard my life to be among them; I expect their fury should do little less than rid me out of their way; and I know one man cannot do much among them: but yet, if your judgment take it to be my duty, I will venture my life; perhaps some other minister may be drawn in, and then some more of the evil may be prevented.

“The ministers finding my own judgment for it, and being moved with the cause, did unanimously give their judgment for my going. Hereupon, I went straight to the committee, and told them that I had an invitation to the army, and desired their consent to go. They consulted a while, and then left it wholly to the governor, saying, that if he consented they should not hinder me. It fell out that Colonel Barker, the governor, was just then to be turned out, as a member of parliament, by the self-denying vote. And one of his

the republican settlers of New-England. The history of the regicide Judges is too well known in this country to need repetition here.

captains (Colonel Willoughby) was to be colonel and governor in his place. Hereupon Colonel Barker was content, in his discontent, that I should go out with him, that he might be missed the more; and so gave me his consent.

“Hereupon I sent word to Col. Whalley that, to-morrow, God willing, I would come to him. As soon as this was done, the elected governor was much displeased; and the soldiers were so much offended at the committee for consenting to my going, that the committee all met again in the night, and sent for me, and told me I must not go. I told them that, by their consent, I had promised, and therefore must go. They told me that the soldiers were ready to mutiny against them, and they could not satisfy them, and therefore I must stay. I told them that I would not have promised, if they had not consented, though being no soldier or chaplain to the garrison, but only preaching to them, I took myself to be a free man, and I could not break my word, when I had promised by their consent. They seemed to deny their consent, and said they only referred me to the governor. In a word, they were so angry with me, that I was fain to tell them all the truth of my motives and design, what a case I perceived the army to be in, and that I was resolved to do my best against it. I knew not, till afterwards, that Colonel William Purefoy, a parliament-man, one of the chief of them, was a confident of Cromwell's; and as soon as I had spoken what I did of the army, magisterially he answereth me, ‘Let me hear no more of that; if Nol Cromwell should hear any soldier but speak such word, he would cleave his crown; you do them wrong. It is not so.’ I told him what he would not hear, he should not hear from me: but I would perform my word though he seemed to deny his. And so I parted with those that had been my very great friends, in some displeasure. The soldiers, however, threatened to stop the gates and keep me in; but, being honest, understanding men, I quickly satisfied the leaders of them by a private intimation of my reasons and resolutions, and some of them accompanied me on my way.

“As soon as I came to the army, Oliver Cromwell coldly bade me welcome, and never spake one word to me more while I was there; nor once, all that time, vouchsafed me an opportunity to

come to the head quarters, where the councils and meetings of the officers were ; so that most of my design was thereby frustrated. His secretary gave out that there was a reformer come to the army to undeceive them, and to save church and state, with some such other jeers ; by which I perceived that all I had said the night before to the committee, had come to Cromwell before me, I believe by Colonel Purefoy's means ; but Colonel Whalley welcomed me, and was the worse thought of for it by the rest of the cabal.

“ Here I set myself, from day to day, to find out the corruptions of the soldiers, and to discourse and dispute them out of their mistakes, both religious and political. My life among them was a daily contending against seducers, and gently arguing with the more tractable ; but another kind of militia I had than theirs.

“ I found that many honest men of weak judgments and little acquaintance with such matters, had been seduced into a disputing vein, and made it too much of their religion to talk for this opinion and for that ; sometimes for state democracy, and sometimes for church democracy ; sometimes against forms of prayer, and sometimes against infant baptism, which yet some of them did maintain ; sometimes against set times of prayer, and against the tying of ourselves to any duty before the Spirit move us ; and sometimes about free-grace and free-will, and all the points of Antinomianism and Arminianism. So that I was almost always, when I had opportunity, disputing with one or other of them ; sometimes for our civil government, and sometimes for church order and government ; sometimes for infant baptism, and oft against Antinomianism, and the contrary extreme. But their most frequent and vehement disputes were for liberty of conscience, as they called it ; that is, that the civil magistrate had nothing to do to determine any thing in matters of religion, by constraint or restraint ; but every man might not only hold, but preach and do, in matters of religion, what he pleased : that the civil magistrate hath nothing to do but with civil things, to keep the peace, protect the church's liberties, &c.

“ I found that one-half almost, of the religious party among them, were such as were either orthodox, or but very slightly touched with their mistakes ; and almost another half were honest men, that stepped further into the contending way than they could well get out of again

but who, with competent help, might be recovered. There were a few fiery, self-conceited men among them, who kindled the rest, and made all the noise and bustle, and carried about the army as they pleased; for the greatest part of the common soldiers, especially of the foot, were ignorant men, of little religion; abundance of them such as had been taken prisoners, or turned out of garrisons under the king, and had been soldiers in his army. These would do any thing to please their officers, and were ready instruments for the seducers, especially in their great work, which was to cry down the covenant, to vilify all parish ministers, but especially the Scots and Presbyterians; for most of the soldiers that I spoke with, never took the covenant, because it tied them to defend the king's person, and to extirpate heresy and schism.

“Because I perceived that it was a few men who bore the bell, and did all the hurt among them, I acquainted myself with those men, and would be oft disputing with them, in the hearing of the rest. I found that they were men who had been in London, hatched up among the old separatists, and had made it all the matter of their study and religion to rail against ministers, parish churches, and Presbyterians; and who had little other knowledge or discourse of any thing about the heart, or heaven. They were fierce with pride and self-conceitedness, and had gotten a very great conquest over their charity, both to the Episcopalians and Presbyterians: whereas many of those honest soldiers who were tainted but with some doubts about liberty of conscience or Independency, were men who would discourse of the points of sanctification and christian experience very savorily. But we so far prevailed in opening the folly of these revilers and self-conceited men, as that some of them became the laughing-stock of the soldiers before I left them; and when they preached, for great preachers they were, their weakness exposed them to contempt. A great part of the mischief they did among the soldiers was by pamphlets, which were abundantly dispersed, such as Overton's *Martin Mar-Priest*, and more of his; and some of J. Lilburn's, who was one of them; and divers against the king, and against the ministry, and for liberty of conscience, &c. And soldiers being usually dispersed in their quarters, they had such books to read, when they had none to contradict them.

“ But there was yet a more dangerous party than these among the soldiers (only in Major Bethel’s troop of our regiment,) who took the direct Jesuitical way. They first most vehemently declaimed against the doctrine of election, and for the power of free-will, and all other points which are controverted between the Jesuits and Dominicans, the Arminians and Calvinists. Then they as fiercely cried down our present translation of the scriptures, and debased their authority, though they did not deny them to be divine. They cried down all our ministry, episcopal, presbyterian and independent, and all our churches. They vilified almost all our ordinary worship, especially singing of psalms and constant family worship; they allowed of no argument from scripture, but what was brought in its express words; they were vehement against both king and all government, but popular: and against magistrates meddling in matters of religion. All their disputing was with as much fierceness as if they had been ready to draw their swords upon those with whom they disputed. They trusted more to policy, scorn, and power, than to argument. They would bitterly scorn me among their hearers, to prejudice them before they entered into dispute. They avoided me as much as possible; but when they did come to it, they drowned all reason in fierceness, and vehemency, and multitude of words. They greatly strove for places of command; and when any place was due by order to another that was not of their mind, they would be sure to work him out, and be ready to mutiny if they had not their will. I thought they were principled by the Jesuits, and acted all for their interest, and in their way; but the secret spring was out of sight. These were the same men that were afterwards called *Levellers*, who rose up against Cromwell, and were surprised at Burford, having then deceived and drawn to them many more. Thompson, the general of the levellers, who was slain then, was no greater a man than one of the corporals of Bethel’s troop; the cornet and others being much worse than he.”*

The battle of Naseby was fought June 14, 1645. The victorious army immediately afterwards marched into the west of England, to encounter the royal forces there under the command of Goring, before the fugitives should have time to rally in that quarter, and

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 50—54.

strengthen the king's last hope. In this expedition Baxter saw first the battle, or rather skirmish, at Langport, in which Goring's forces were routed. Next he was at the storming of Bridgewater. Thence he went with the conquerors to Bristol, which after a month's siege was ingloriously surrendered. After the first three days of this siege he was taken sick with a fever, and on the first symptoms of the disease, retired, and with much difficulty reached Bath; where under careful medical attendance he recovered, from the brink of death, sufficiently to reach the army again, three or four days before the city was taken. Then after two weeks at the siege of Sherborne castle, which was at last taken by storm, he went with the main body of the army under Fairfax, still further west, in pursuit of Goring. He staid three weeks at the siege of Exeter; and then Whalley's regiment with some others being sent back, he returned with them.

The service on which Whalley was now sent, with these regiments of horse, was to watch the garrison with which the king had shut himself up in Oxford, till the army should come to besiege that city, which was the most considerable place then in the hands of the royal party. About six weeks in winter, they were quartered in Buckinghamshire; and then they were sent to besiege Banbury Castle, about twenty miles north of Oxford, which after two months was taken. After this enterprise, the same regiments were sent with some forces of the neighboring militia, to besiege Worcester, while the main army having returned from the west was employed before Oxford. The siege of Worcester lasted eleven weeks. In all these marches and sieges Baxter was with his regiment, pursuing with characteristic zeal, his scheme of preaching down, and arguing down, that radical and revolutionary spirit, from which he anticipated the most disastrous results.

“By this time,” he adds, “Colonel Whalley, though Cromwell's kinsman, and commander of the trusted regiment, grew odious among the sectarian commanders at the head quarters, for my sake; and was called a Presbyterian, though neither he nor I were of that judgment in several points. When he had brought the city to a necessity of present yielding, two or three days before it yielded, Colonel Rainsborough was sent from Oxford, which had yield-

ed, with some regiments of foot, to command, in chief ; partly that he might be governor there, and not Whalley, when the city was surrendered. So when it was yielded, Rainsborough was governor, to head and gratify the sectaries, and settle city and county in their way ; but the committee of the county were for Whalley, and lived in distaste with Rainsborough, and the sectaries prospered there no further than Worcester city itself, a place which deserved such a judgment ; but all the country was free from their infection.

“ All this while, as I had friendly converse with the sober part, so I was still employed with the rest as before, in preaching, conference, and disputing against their confounding errors ; and in all places where we went, the sectarian soldiers much infected the counties, by their pamphlets and converse. The people admiring the conquering army, were ready to receive whatsoever they commended to them ; and it was the way of the faction to represent what they said, as the sense of the army, and to make the people believe that whatever opinion they vented, which one in forty of the army owned not, was the army’s opinion. When we quartered at Agmondesham, in Buckinghamshire, some sectaries of Chesham had set up a public meeting as for conference, to propagate their opinions through all the country ; and this in the church, by the encouragement of an ignorant sectarian lecturer, one Bramble, whom they had got in, while Dr. Cook, the pastor, and Mr. Richardson, his curate, durst not contradict them. When this public talking-day came, Bethel’s troopers, with other sectarian soldiers, must be there to confirm the Chesham men, and make men believe that the army was for them. I thought it my duty to be there also, and took divers sober officers with me, to let them see that more of the army were against them than for them. I took the reading pew, and Pitchford’s cornet and troopers took the gallery. And there I found a crowded congregation of poor well-meaning people, who came in the simplicity of their hearts to be deceived. Then did the leader of the Chesham men begin, and afterwards Pitchford’s soldiers set in, and I alone disputed against them from morning until almost night ; for I knew their trick, that if I had but gone out first, they would have prated what boasting words they listed when I was gone, and made the people believe that they had

baffled me, or got the best ; therefore, I stayed it out till they first rose and went away." Some of the sober people of Agmondesham, gave me abundance of thanks for that day's work, which they said would never be there forgotten ; I heard also that the sectaries were so discouraged that they never met there any more.

" The great impediments to the success of my endeavors, I found were only two ; the discountenance of Cromwell and the chief officers of his mind, which kept me a stranger from their meetings and councils ; and my incapacity of speaking to many, as soldiers' quarters are scattered far from one another, and I could be but in one place at once. So that one troop at a time, ordinarily, and some few more extraordinarily, was all that I could speak to. The most of the service I did beyond Whalley's regiment was, by the help of Captain Lawrence, with some of the General's regiment, and sometimes I had converse with Major Harrison and a few others ; but I found that if the army had only had ministers enough, who would have done such little as I did, all their plot must have been broken, and king, and parliament, and religion, might have been preserved. I, therefore, sent abroad to get some more ministers among them, but I could get none. Saltmarsh and Dell were the two great preachers at the head quarters ; but honest and judicious Mr. Edward Bowles kept still with the General. At last I got Mr. Cook, of Roxhall, to come to assist me ; and the soberer part of the officers and soldiers of Whalley's regiment were willing to remunerate him out of their own pay. A month or two he staid and assisted me ; but was quickly weary, and left them again. He was a very worthy, humble, laborious man, unwearied in preaching, but weary when he had not an opportunity to preach, and weary of the spirits he had to deal with.

" All this while, though I came not near Cromwell, his designs were visible, and I saw him continually acting his part. The Lord General suffered him to govern and to do all, and to choose almost all the officers of the army. He first made Ireton commissary-general ; and when any troop or company was to be disposed of, or any considerable officer's place was void, he was sure to put a secretary in the place ; and when the brunt of the war was over, he looked not so much at their valor as their opinions ; so that, by degrees,

he had headed the greatest part of the army with anabaptists, antinomians, seekers, or separatists at best. All these he led together by the point of liberty of conscience, which was the common interest in which they did unite. Yet all the sober party were carried on by his profession, that he only promoted the universal interest of the godly, without any distinction or partiality at all; but still, when a place fell void, it was twenty to one a sectary had it; and if a godly man, of any other mind or temper, had a mind to leave the army, he would, secretly or openly, further it. Yet he did not openly profess what opinion he was of himself.”*

The fact which Baxter here testifies, namely that all this while he came not near Cromwell, is a fact which ought to qualify his strictures on Cromwell’s proceedings and intentions. Baxter feared, as well he might, the progress of arminianism, antinomianism and fanaticism in the army; and he used, with laudable diligence, the weapons of his warfare to check those evils. Had he been intimate with the counsels of the sectarian commanders at head quarters, he might have seen other evils at work in other quarters, and threatening to become, in their results, not less disastrous to the cause of truth and holiness. Cromwell saw, what the good chaplain of Whalley’s regiment seems never to have suspected, that the Presbyterian party in the assembly and in parliament, were determined to set up their Scotch hierarchy as the kingdom of Jesus Christ, and, under the claim of a divine right, to put again upon the necks of Independents, Baptists, and all other sectaries, a yoke of uniformity, which neither they nor their fathers had been able to bear. Seeing this, he must have felt himself bound to use all proper means for the defeat of such a design; and it is not difficult to suppose that he may have acted as conscientiously in his measures for the defence of the great principles on which the revolution rested, as Baxter acted in attempting to argue down the vagaries of antinomian fanatics.

After the surrender of Worcester, the war with the king being apparently at an end, Baxter visited his old flock at Kidderminster, and was earnestly importuned to resume his labors there. On this

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 55, 57.

application he went to Coventry, and sought the advice of the ministers there, by whose counsel he had first gone into the army. In asking their advice he told them not only all his fears, but that his own judgment was clear for staying in the army till the crisis which he expected should arrive. Their opinion accorded with his; and he determined on a still longer absence from the peaceful labors of his pastoral charge.

About this time he retired from his quarters for a while on account of his health. He visited London for medical assistance, and spent some time at Tunbridge wells, and returned to his regiment in Worcestershire, prepared to go on with his work. But soon the fatigue and exposure of moving from place to place, as in that military life he was under the necessity of doing, during a cold and snowy season had almost proved fatal to him. He was attacked with a violent bleeding at the nose, which continued till his strength and almost his life was exhausted.

“And thus,” he says, “God unavoidably prevented all the effect of my purposes in my last and chiefest opposition of the army; and took me off at the very time when my attempt should have begun. My purpose was to have done my best, first to take off that regiment which I was with, and then, with Capt. Lawrence, to have tried upon the General’s, in which too was Cromwell’s chief confidence; and then to have joined with others of the same mind; for the other regiments were much less corrupted. But the determination of God against it was most observable; for the very time that I was bleeding, the council of war sat at Nottingham, where, as I have credibly heard, they first began to open their purposes, and act their part; and, presently after, they entered into their engagement at Triploe Heath. And as I perceived it was the will of God to permit them to go on, so I afterwards found that this great affliction was a mercy to myself; for they were so strong, and active, that I had been likely to have had small success in the attempt, and to have lost my life among them in their fury. And thus I was finally separated from the army.

“When I had staid at Melbourne, in my chamber, three weeks, being among strangers, and not knowing how to get home, I went to Mr. Nowell’s house, at Kirby-Mallory, in Leicestershire, where,

with great kindness, I was entertained three weeks. By that time, the tidings of my weakness came to the Lady Rous, in Worcestershire, who sent her servant to seek me out; and when he returned, and told her I was afar off, and he could not find me, she sent him again to find me, and bring me thither, if I were able to travel. So, in great weakness, thither I made shift to get, where I was entertained with the greatest care and tenderness, while I continued the use of means for my recovery; and when I had been there a quarter of a year, I returned to Kidderminster.”*

It was during this long sickness, and while he was anticipating a speedy departure, that he employed himself in writing that work on the “Saint’s Everlasting Rest,” which has made his name dear to the friends of serious and practical religion through the world. This was the first written of all his published compositions. A much smaller work, entitled “Aphorisms of Justification,” designed to refute some of the antinomian errors which he had been combatting in the army, was commenced while the “Saint’s Rest” was still unfinished and was published in 1649, two years after his return to Kidderminster. The “Saint’s Rest” was published in 1650.

Of the circumstances in which this work was written, the author says, “While I was in health, I had not the least thought of writing books, or of serving God in any more public way than preaching; but when I was weakened with great bleeding, and left solitary in my chamber at Sir John Cook’s in Derbyshire, without any acquaintance but my servant about me, and was sentenced to death by the physicians, I began to contemplate more seriously on the everlasting rest, which I apprehended myself to be just on the borders of. That my thoughts might not too much scatter in my meditation, I began to write something on that subject, intending but the quantity of a sermon or two; but being continued long in weakness, where I had no books and no better employment, I followed it on, till it was enlarged to the bulk in which it is published. The first three weeks I spent in it was at Mr. Nowel’s house, at Kirby Mallory, in Leicestershire; a quarter of a year more, at

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 58, 59.

the seasons which so great weakness would allow, I bestowed on it at Sir Thomas Rous's house at Rous-Lench in Worcestershire; and I finished it shortly after at Kidderminster."

"The marginal citations I put in after I came home to my books, but almost all the book itself was written when I had no book but a Bible and a Concordance; and I found that the transcript of the heart hath the greatest force on the hearts of others. For the good that I have heard that multitudes have received by that writing, and the benefit which I have again received by their prayers, I here humbly return my thanks to Him that compelled me to write it."*

There are few testimonies to the great intellectual vigor, and the extraordinary industry of Baxter, more surprising than the fact that "The Saint's Everlasting Rest," which at its first publication was a quarto volume of eight hundred pages, was written in six months, while the author stood languishing and fainting between life and death.

* Narrative, Part I. p. 106.

PART THIRD.

THE personal history of Baxter is so closely connected with the history of the times in which he lived, that it seems ^{it} necessary in this place briefly to review the progress of public events from the siege of Oxford in the beginning of the year 1646, to the death of Cromwell in September 1658.

After the battles and sieges by which all the southwestern parts of England had been reduced under the power of the parliament, the victorious army, commanded by Fairfax and Cromwell, returned as soon as the spring opened, to put an end to the war by besieging the king in his head-quarters at Oxford. On receiving this intelligence, and learning that the enemy was just at hand, Charles, with only two attendants, left the city by night, in disguise, and fleeing to the north, threw himself into the hands of the Scottish army then employed in the siege of Newark. He was aware that the Scots, in their zeal for covenant uniformity, had begun to be disgusted with the dilatory proceedings of the English parliament respecting the establishment of presbyterianism as the only and divinely authorized form of church government; he knew that they looked on the progress of independency with equal alarm and abhorrence; and his hope was that by throwing himself upon them, whose claims in relation to their own country he had fully satisfied, he might be able to break up their alliance with England. The Scottish generals, however, refused to enter into any separate treaty with him; and while they paid him scrupulously all the exterior respect due to majesty, he was in fact a prisoner rather than a sovereign. At their suggestion, which in his circumstances differed little from a command, he gave orders to the commanders at Oxford, and in all his other garrisons, to surrender to the parlia-

ment; and thus the war was ended, the last of the royal garrisons being surrendered, a little less than four years from the day on which the king set up his standard at Nottingham.

Charles continued with the Scots eight months. The parliament and the Scottish commissioners offered him terms of reconciliation, better than conquerors ordinarily impose upon the vanquished. His friends importunately urged him to accept those terms, as the best provision which he could possibly make for himself and for his partizans. But he was now infatuated with the visionary expectation of dividing his enemies. He addressed himself to the Scots, representing to them how probable it was that the independents would secure a toleration in spite of the provisions of the covenant, and proposing that if episcopacy might be continued in four of the dioceses of England, the presbyterian discipline should be established in all the other parts of the kingdom, with the strictest enactments that could be devised against both papists and sectarians. At the same time he entered into a more private negotiation with the leaders of the army, who proposed to set him on his throne again, without his taking the covenant or renouncing the liturgy, if he would but secure, with the civil liberties of the people, a general toleration in religion. Had he in this emergency enlisted frankly on either side, he might have retrieved something of his fallen fortunes. But he had too much imbecility of character to decide in such circumstances; and while he lingered, hoping to set one party against the other, and to secure from their mutual collision the re-establishment of his entire authority, he suffered the opportunity to go by without accepting the proposals of either. The Scots after some negotiation with the English parliament, finding that they could make no agreement with the king, and that to retain his person in their hands would be attended with much loss and hazard, and with no probable advantage, surrendered him to the commissioners appointed by parliament, by whom he was conducted to Holmby House in Northamptonshire the place appointed for his residence.

Meanwhile, as the disposition of the parliament towards a strict presbyterian establishment, excluding all toleration, became more manifest, the dissatisfaction of the army increased; and they were

gradually brought to the fixed resolution that they would be heard on that point, and that their opinions should be regarded in all the measures which concerned their separate interests or that common religious liberty for which they had been fighting. To this end they elected a *council* of officers, and a body of adjutators, or assistants, consisting of three or four from each regiment, representing the common soldiers. These two councils held their separate sessions, like the two houses of parliament, and considered freely all the proposals and orders of the parliament in relation to the settlement of the kingdom, or the disposal of the army. By this organization the army became a military republic, and ceased to be governed by the civil authority. Indeed the nation was in a state in which hardly any rightful authority could be said to exist. The king had forfeited his right to govern. The parliament having gotten the power into their hands, betrayed a disposition to keep it; and there being no law to secure the dissolution of the existing parliament and the election of another, the members in proportion as their body approximated to the character of a perpetual senate, became in fact and in public estimation, the usurping sovereigns rather than the representatives and organs of the people. It was not strange then that the army should feel themselves justified in refusing to be disbanded, or to be otherwise disposed of, till justice should be done to them as public creditors, and the peace and liberty of the nation should be secured on some basis satisfactory to their judgment. Having taken such a resolution they communicated it, by a formal delegation, to parliament.

The presbyterian party seeing whereunto this might grow, hastened their treaty with the king, and seemed to be on the point of concluding it, as if they were more willing to make any sacrifice than to consent to that religious freedom which the army demanded. The treaty was suddenly broken off by an unexpected movement. A cornet, acting probably under the direction of the adjutators, came to Holmby at the head of fifty horse, and removed the king from the midst of his guards and keepers to the quarters of the army at Newmarket. It does not appear that the king felt any decided aversion to this removal. He was treated with much more consideration by the officers of the army, than he had

been by the parliamentary commissioners ; and he had more personal liberty at Newmarket, than he had known before from the time of his surrendering himself to the Scots.

The news of this bold measure, threw the parliament and the city into great confusion. It was expected that the army would be instantly before the city ; and hasty preparations were made for a defense. Commissioners were sent to the general to forbid the approach of the army. Fairfax replied that they would make no further advance without giving due notice ; and he assured the houses that there was no design to overthrow the presbyterian government or to set up the independent, and that the army claimed nothing more than the privilege of dissenting from the established religion. After some negotiation, the presbyterians in the parliament and the city, began to recover courage ; and the army began to reply in bolder language. The citizens grew violent, and by tumultuous petitions endeavored to bring the parliament to stronger measures. But the speakers of the two houses and with them a very considerable portion of the members, not a few of whom were zealous presbyterians, fearing these tumults, withdrew from the city, and claimed the protection of the army that the parliament might be free. The army was immediately put in motion, and on its approach, the city submitted without a defense. A few of the most active presbyterian leaders, were under the necessity of abandoning their places in the house of commons ; and from this time, the proceedings of parliament were generally conformed to the wishes of the army.

The king was all this while with the army ; and when the city and parliament had submitted, he was allowed to reside at his palace of Hampton Court, where he appeared in great state, and was attended by throngs of people from the city and the country. Cromwell and Ireton conferred with him privately about restoring him to the throne. They made him better offers than those of the parliament ; and there is no sufficient reason to doubt the sincerity of their proposals. But he was still infatuated with the notion that neither party could exist without him, and that each would willingly outbid the other to secure his name and influence. Thus he carried on a deceitful negotiation with both parties, till his duplicity

was discovered by a letter to his wife which Cromwell intercepted. Upon this discovery, Cromwell informed the king's most intimate attendant that he would have no more to do with a man so unworthy of his confidence, and would no longer be responsible, as he had been, for his personal safety. The unhappy monarch, without seeming to have formed any definite plan of escape, fled from Hampton Court, and a few hours afterwards found himself, he hardly knew how, a prisoner in the Isle of Wight.

Here he was soon visited by commissioners from parliament, offering him certain proposals to which his assent was required as preliminary to any further negotiation. It was very distinctly intimated that if he rejected these propositions, they would proceed to settle the nation without him. The preliminaries now proposed, were not materially different from the terms which he had formerly rejected. He now declined them once more, having already entered on a secret treaty with the Scottish commissioners, which was signed three days afterwards. In this treaty, the king on the one hand promised that the covenant should be confirmed by act of parliament; that the presbyterian discipline should be established in England for three years, and afterwards such a system as should be agreed on in the mean time, the king and his household having the privilege of using those forms of worship to which they had been accustomed; and that an effectual course should be taken to suppress all heresy and schism. The Scots on the other hand, who had long been dissatisfied with their English friends as wanting in zeal for the covenant, and who had become finally disgusted on witnessing the predominant influence of the military sectarians, promised to raise an army which should deliver the king from his imprisonment and restore him to his authority. This treaty was signed near the close of the year 1647.

Early in the following year, the nation was again involved in war. The Scots, in compliance with their new treaty, invaded England under the banner of the covenant; the king's old friends rising simultaneously, wherever they were numerous enough to show themselves. The army which had overawed the parliament by being quartered about London, was now drawn off to meet the common enemy; and the presbyterian party immediately regained its old

ascendency in the city. A new treaty was set on foot with the king, and though long delayed by the efforts of the minority in parliament, was at last on the point of being concluded and carried into execution; when the army, having once more crushed all armed opposition, suddenly marched to London, and all was reversed. Military usurpation became the order of the day. A great number of presbyterians were forcibly expelled from the house of commons. The lords, refusing to concur with the acts of the lower house thus mutilated, were no longer acknowledged as a branch of the legislature. A high court of justice was erected by the commons for the trial of "Charles Stuart king of England;" and by the sentence of that court after a public trial, the king was beheaded on the thirtieth of January, 1649.

The Rump, for that was the name which the people in derision applied to the remnant of the parliament, consisted chiefly of zealous republicans, and was therefore resolved on the establishment of a commonwealth which might surpass in renown the classic republics of antiquity. But, as the republicans were in fact only a minority in the nation, it was felt that the people could not be trusted with this favorite project. Therefore the existing members of parliament must still retain the power in their own hands; though they made many fair promises that as soon as peace and order should be established, they would resign their power, and give the people an opportunity to elect new rulers. Meanwhile for the security of the infant commonwealth, all the subjects were called on to profess allegiance to its government. This promise was styled the "engagement," and was thus expressed, "I do promise to be true and faithful to the commonwealth, as it is now established, without a king or house of lords."

In Scotland, Charles II. was proclaimed king, and was invited to come over from Holland where he had found refuge, and to receive his crown, on condition of his taking the covenant and submitting to many additional restrictions and engagements. The Rump, seeing no immediate danger likely to arise from that quarter, left the Scots to settle their own government in their own way. Cromwell was sent to command in Ireland, where after a bloody war of nine months, he established beyond resistance or dispute, the authority of the commonwealth.

In the meantime Charles II. despairing of any other relief, had accepted the proposals of the Scots and had come over into that kingdom. With a hypocrisy which has few parallels even in the history of his own faithless family, he solemnly swore to the covenant. He published a formal declaration, setting forth his humiliation and grief for the wickedness of his father and the idolatry of his mother, as well as for his own sins; professing his detestation of all popery, superstition, prelacy, heresy, schism, and profaneness; and promising that he would never favor those who followed his interests, in preference to the interests of the gospel and of the kingdom of Christ. Those who ruled in England, saw that this attempted reconciliation between Charles and the Scots, if attended with any measure of success, must imply some invasion of their peace and power; and they resolved to be before-hand with the young king and his new subjects. War was determined on; and Fairfax having resigned his command, out of his presbyterian regard to the covenant, Cromwell was made captain-general of all the forces. With characteristic promptness he invaded Scotland, and soon reduced the king to desperate circumstances. By a bold movement suited to such circumstances, Charles with the main body of the Scottish army marched into England, hoping that his friends there, and the many others who were dissatisfied with the existing government, would instantly rally around him. In this he was disappointed; Cromwell having left a detachment to complete the subjugation of Scotland, followed hard after him, and at Worcester his army was annihilated, and he himself putting on the disguise of a servant with great difficulty escaped out of the kingdom. This battle, which Cromwell called his "crowning mercy," was fought on the third of September 1651.

Mutual dissatisfaction still existed between the parliament and the army. Peace was now established; the three kingdoms were consolidated into one commonwealth; and the parliament were loudly reminded of the promises which they had made to abdicate their power. Still they were unwilling to trust the people, and they resolved on continuing their own authority. At this crisis, Cromwell, having surrounded the house with soldiers, rose up in his place, and declaring that God had called him to dissolve that

assembly, told them they were no longer a parliament and bid them begone. Thus ended the Long Parliament, in 1653, and the only government of the nation was in the hands of the general and his council of officers.

By these men, after one short experiment of a parliament chosen by themselves, a new constitution was imposed on the nation. Cromwell was invested with the power of a limited monarch, under the title of Lord Protector of the Commonwealth; and provision was made for triennial parliaments, to be elected by the people. Under this government, though royalists and republicans, prelatists and presbyterians, papists and fanatics, united in hating it, the people enjoyed order and prosperity till the death of the Protector.

We now return to Baxter's personal history, to the elucidation of which this survey of public events seemed necessary.

"I have related how after my bleeding a gallon of blood, by the nose, that I was left weak at Sir Thomas Rouse's house, at Rous Lench, where I was taken up with daily medicines to prevent a dropsy; and being conscious that my time had not been improved to the service of God as I desired it had been, I put up many an earnest prayer, that God would restore me, and use me more successfully in his work. Blessed be that mercy which heard my groans in the day of my distress; and gratified my desires and wrought my deliverance when men and means failed, and gave me opportunity to celebrate his praise.

"Whilst I there continued, weak and unable to preach, the people of Kidderminster had again renewed their articles against their old vicar and his curate. Upon trial of the cause, the committee sequestered the place, but put no one into it; but put the profits in the hands of divers of the inhabitants, to pay a preacher till it were disposed of. They sent to me and desired me to take it, in case I were again enabled to preach; which I flatly refused, and told them I would take only the lecture, which, by his own consent and bond, I held before. Hereupon they sought Mr. Brumskill and others to accept the place, but could not meet with any one to their minds; therefore, they chose one Mr Richard Serjeant to officiate, reserving the vicarage for some one that was fitter.

“When I was able, after about five months, to go abroad, I went to Kidderminster, where I found only Mr. Serjeant in possession; and the people again vehemently urged me to take the vicarage; which I denied, and got the magistrates and burgesses together into the townhall, and told them, that though I had been offered many hundred pounds per annum elsewhere, I was willing to continue with them in my old lecturer’s place, which I had before the wars, expecting they would make the maintenance a hundred pounds a year, and a house; and if they would promise to submit to that doctrine of Christ, which as his minister, I should deliver to them, proved by the holy scriptures, I would not leave them. And that this maintenance should neither come out of their own purses, nor any more of it out of the tithes, save the sixty pounds which the vicar had before bound himself to pay me, I undertook to procure an augmentation for Mitton (a chapel in the parish) of forty pounds per annum, which I did; and so the sixty pounds and that forty were to be my part, and the rest I was to have nothing to do with. This covenant was drawn up between us in articles, and subscribed; in which I disclaimed the vicarage and pastoral charge of the parish, and only undertook the lecture.

“Thus the sequestration continued in the hands of the townsmen, as aforesaid, who gathered the tithes and paid me (not a hundred as they promised) but eighty pounds per annum, or ninety at most, and house-rent for a few rooms in the top of another man’s house, which is all I had at Kidderminster. The rest they gave to Mr. Serjeant, and about forty pounds per annum to the old vicar; six pounds per annum to the king and lord for rents, and a few other charges.”

“Besides this ignorant vicar, there was a chapel in the parish, where was an old curate as ignorant as he, that had long lived upon ten pounds a year and unlawful marriages, and was a drunkard and a railer, and the scorn of the country. I knew not how to keep him from reading, for I judged it a sin to tolerate him in any sacred office. I got an augmentation for the place, and an honest preacher to instruct them, and let this scandalous fellow keep his former stipend of ten pounds for nothing; and yet could never keep him from forcing himself upon the people to read, nor from unlawful

marriages, till a little before death did call him to his account. I have examined him about the familiar points of religion and he could not say half so much to me as I have heard a child say.*

During the revolutionary times which followed, Baxter's feelings were enlisted chiefly with the presbyterian party. His views of Cromwell and of the sectarians have already been sufficiently exhibited. He had many conscientious scruples about the allegiance due to the person of the king ; and therefore he abhorred not only the execution of Charles, but all the distinctive principles and measures of the party which finally predominated. And as he felt, so he always acted. " When the soldiers were going against the king and the Scots, I wrote letters to some of them," he says, " to tell them of their sin, and desired them at last to begin to know themselves, it being those same men that have so much boasted of love to all the godly, and pleaded for tender dealing with them, who are now ready to imbrue their swords in the blood of such as they acknowledge to be godly."

" At the same time, the Rump who so much abhorred persecution, and were for liberty of conscience, made an order that all ministers should keep their days of humiliation to fast and pray for their success in Scotland, and that we should keep their days of thanksgiving for their victories, and this upon pain of sequestration : so that we all expected to be turned out. But they did not execute it upon any save one in our parts : " a fact which shows that their love of toleration was not mere profession.

" For my part," continues the narrative, " instead of praying and preaching for them, when any of the committee or soldiers were my hearers, I labored to help them understand what a crime it was to force men to pray for the success of those who were violating their covenant and loyalty, and going, in such a cause to kill their brethren." " My own hearers were all satisfied with my doctrine ; but the committee men looked sour, but let me alone. And the soldiers said, I was so like to Love, that I would not be right till I was shorter by the head. Yet none of them ever med-

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 79, 80.

dled with me, farther than by the tongue; nor was I ever by any of them in those times forbidden or hindered to preach one sermon, only one assize sermon, which the high sheriff had desired me to preach, and afterwards sent me word to forbear, and not to preach before the judges, because I preached against the state. But afterwards they excused it, as done merely in kindness to me, to keep me from running myself into danger and trouble.”*

Christopher Love who is referred to in the preceding paragraph, was one of eight presbyterian ministers in London, who, with others, were arrested on account of some measures which they were secretly pursuing to aid the king, and to unite the Presbyterians with the Scots in maintaining his authority. Seven were pardoned on the recantation of one of them; but Love, and another, a layman concerned in the same conspiracy, were made examples of public justice. He “was beheaded, dying neither timorously nor proudly in any desperate bravado, but with as great alacrity and fearless quietness as if he had but gone to bed, and had been as little concerned as the standers by.”

Baxter’s conscientious scruples, and his presbyterian feelings would of course lead him to refuse any distinct acknowledgment of the government which was erected after the express abolition of monarchy. When the “engagement,” or promise of fidelity to the commonwealth, was put upon the people, he took his stand fearlessly against it.

“For my own part,” he says, “though I kept the town and parish of Kidderminster from taking the covenant, seeing how it might become a snare to their consciences; yea, and most of Worcestershire besides, by keeping the ministers from offering it in any of the congregations to the people, except in Worcester city, where I had no great interest, and knew not what they did; yet I could not judge it seemly for him that believed there is a God, to play fast and loose with a dreadful oath, as if the bonds of national and personal vows were as easily shaken off as Sampson’s cords.—Therefore I spake and preached against the engagement, and dissuaded men from taking it.”†

* Narrative, Part I. p. 67.

† Narrative, Part I. p. 64.

The principles by which he regulated his conduct in regard to the government of Cromwell, while it continued, he thus describes. "I did seasonably and moderately, by preaching and printing, condemn the usurpation, and the deceit which was the means to bring it to pass. I did in open conference declare Cromwell and his adherents to be guilty of treason and rebellion, aggravated by perfidiousness and hypocrisy. But yet I did not think it my duty to rave against him in the pulpit, nor to do this so unseasonably and imprudently as might irritate him to mischief. And the rather because, as he kept up his approbation of a godly life in general, and and of all that was good, except that which the interest of his sinful cause engaged him to be against ; so I perceived that it was his design to do good in the main, and to promote the gospel and the interest of godliness, more than any had done before him ; except in those particulars which his own interest was against. The principal means that hence-forward he trusted to for his own establishment, was doing good that the people might love him, or at least be willing to have his government for that good, who were against it as it was usurpation. And I made no question but that when the rightful governor was restored, the people who had adhered to him, being so extremely irritated, would cast out multitudes of the ministers, and undo the good which the usurper had done, because he did it, and would bring abundance of calamity upon the land. Some men thought it a very hard question, whether they should rather wish the continuance of an usurper that will do good, or the restitution of a rightful governor whose followers will do hurt. For my own part, I thought my duty was clear to disown the usurper's sin what good soever he would do ; and to perform all my engagements to a rightful governor, leaving the issue of all to God ; but yet to commend the good which an usurper doth, and to do any lawful thing which may provoke him to do more ; and to approve of no evil which is done by any, either usurper or lawful governor."*

At a later period he seems to have changed his mind, respecting the course of conduct here recorded. In 1691, he wrote, "I am

* Narrative, Part I. p. 71.

in great doubt how far I did well or ill in my opposition to Cromwell and his army at last. I am satisfied that it was my duty to disown, and as I said, to oppose their rebellion and other sins. But there were many honest, pious men among them. And when God chooseth the executioner of justice as he pleaseth, I am oft in doubt whether I should not have been more passive and silent than I was; though not as Jeremiah to Nebuchadnezzar, to persuade men to submit, yet to have forborne some sharp public preaching and writing against them,—when they set themselves too late to promote piety to ingratiate their usurpation. To disturb possessors needeth a clear call, when for what end soever they do that good, which men of better title will destroy.”*

But it is more pleasant to turn, from the confusion of these public changes, to the calm laborious life of the diligent pastor among the people of his charge. In what circumstances Baxter first found the people of Kidderminster; what hatred and opposition he encountered; and how the violence of the infuriated rabble compelled him to flee for safety, after a two years residence among them; need not be here repeated. The recollection of these things, however, imparts additional interest to the record of his labors and successes among the same people in more favorable circumstances. The story of his life as a pastor, cannot be better told than in his own words.

“I shall next record to the praise of my Redeemer, the comfortable employment and successes which he vouchsafed me during my abode at Kidderminster, under all these weaknesses. And, 1st. I will mention my employment. 2. My successes. And, 3. Those advantages by which, under God, they were procured.

“Before the wars, I preached twice each Lord’s day; but after the war, but once, and once every Thursday, besides occasional sermons. Every Thursday evening, my neighbors, who were most desirous, and had opportunity, met at my house, and there one of them repeated the sermon; afterwards they proposed what doubts any of them had about the sermon, or any other case of conscience; and I resolved their doubts: last of all, I caused some-

* Penitent Confessions, pp. 24, 25, quoted by Orme.

times one and sometimes another of them to pray, to exercise them ; and sometimes I prayed with them myself : which, beside singing a psalm, was all they did. And once a week, also, some of the younger sort, who were not fit to pray in so great an assembly, met among a few more privately, where they spent three hours in prayer together. Every Saturday night, they met at some of their houses, to repeat the sermon of the last Lord's day, and to pray and prepare themselves for the following day. Once in a few weeks, we had a day of humiliation on one occasion or other. Every religious woman that was safely delivered, instead of the old feasting and gossipings, if they were able, did keep a day of thanksgiving with some of their neighbors, with them, praising God, and singing psalms, and soberly feasting together. Two days every week, my assistant and myself took fourteen families between us, for private catechising and conference ; he going through the parish, and the town coming to me. I first heard them recite the words of the catechism, and then examined them about the sense ; and lastly, urged them, with all possible engaging reason and vehemency, to answerable affection and practice. If any of them were stalled through ignorance or bashfulness, I forbore to press them any farther to answers, but made them hearers, and either examined others, or turned all into instruction and exhortation. But this I have opened more fully in my Reformed Pastor. I spent about an hour with each family, and admitted no others to be present ; lest bashfulness should make it burthensome, or any should talk of the weaknesses of others : so that all the afternoons on Mondays and Tuesdays I spent in this, after I had begun it, (for it was many years before I did attempt it,) and my assistant spent the morning of the same day in the same employment. Before that, I only catechised them in the church, and conferred with now and then one, occasionally.

“ Beside all this, I was forced, five or six years, by the people's necessity, to practise physic. A common pleurisy happening one year, and no physician being near, I was forced to advise them, to save their lives ; and I could not afterwards avoid the importunity of the town and country round about. And because I never took a penny of any one, I was crowded with patients ; so that almost

twenty would be at my door at once : and though God, by more success than I expected, so long encouraged me, yet, at last, I could endure it no longer ; partly because it hindered my other studies, and partly because the very fear of miscarrying and doing any one harm, did make it an intolerable burden to me. So that, after some years' practice, I procured a godly diligent physician to come and live in the town, and bound myself, by promise, to practise no more, unless in consultation with him, in case of any seeming necessity ; and so with that answer I turned them all off, and never meddled with it again.

“ But all these my labors (except my private conference with the families,) even preaching and preparing for it, were but my recreations, and, as it were, the work of my spare hours ; for my writings were my chiefest daily labor ; which yet went the more slowly on, that I never one hour had an amanuensis to dictate to, and especially because my weakness took up so much of my time. For all the pains that my infirmities ever brought upon me, were never half so grievous an affliction as the unavoidable loss of my time which they occasioned. I could not bear, through the weakness of my stomach, to rise before seven o'clock in the morning, and afterwards not till much later ; and some infirmities I labored under, made it above an hour before I could be dressed. An hour, I must of necessity have to walk before dinner, and another before supper ; and after supper I can seldom study : all which, beside times of family duties, and prayer, and eating, &c. leaveth me but little time to study : which hath been the greatest external personal affliction of all my life.

“ Besides all these, every first Wednesday of the month was our monthly meeting for parish discipline ; and every first Thursday of the month, was the ministers' meeting for discipline and disputation. In those disputations it fell to my lot to be almost constant moderator ; and for every such day, usually, I prepared a written determination ; all which I mention as my mercies and delights, and not as my burdens. Every Thursday, besides, I had the company of divers godly ministers at my house, after the lecture, with whom I spent that afternoon in the truest recreation, till my neighbors came to meet for their exercise of repetition and prayer.

“For ever blessed be the God of mercies, that brought me from the grave, and gave me, after wars and sickness, fourteen years’ liberty in such sweet employment ! and that, in times of usurpation, I had all this mercy and happy freedom ; when under our rightful king and governor, I, and many hundreds more, are silenced and laid by as broken vessels, and suspected and vilified as scarce to be tolerated to live privately and quietly in the land ! that God should make days of licentiousness and disorder under an usurper so great a mercy to me, and many a thousand more, who under the lawful governors which they desired, and in the days when order is said to be restored, do sit in obscurity and unprofitable silence, and some lie in prison ; and all of us are accounted as the scum and sweepings, or offscourings of the earth. .

“I have mentioned my sweet and acceptable employment ; let me, to the praise of my gracious Lord, acquaint you with some of my success ; and I will not suppress it, though I foreknow that the malignant will impute the mention of it to pride and ostentation. For it is the sacrifice of thanksgiving which I owe to my most gracious God, which I will not deny him, for fear of being censured as proud ; lest I prove myself proud, indeed, while I cannot undergo the imputation of pride in the performance of my thanks for such undeserved mercies.

“My public preaching met with an attentive, diligent auditory. Having broke over the brunt of the opposition of the rabble before the wars, I found them afterwards tractable and unprejudiced. Before I entered into the ministry, God blessed my private conference to the conversion of some, who remain firm and eminent in holiness to this day : but then, and in the beginning of my ministry, I was wont to number them as jewels ; but since then I could not keep any number of them. The congregation was usually full, so that we were fain to build five galleries after my coming thither ; the church itself being very capacious, and the most commodious and convenient that ever I was in. Our private meetings, also, were full. On the Lord’s days there was no disorder to be seen in the streets ; but you might hear a hundred families singing psalms and repeating sermons as you passed through the streets. In a word, when I came thither first, there was about one family in a

street that worshipped God and called on his name, and when I came away, there were some streets where there was not past one family in the side that did not do so; and did not, by professing serious godliness, give us hopes of their sincerity. And in those families which were the worst, being inns and alehouses, usually some persons in each house did seem to be religious.

“Though our administration of the Lord’s Supper was so ordered as displeased many, and the far greater part kept away themselves, yet we had six hundred that were communicants; of whom there were not twelve that I had not good hopes of, as to their sincerity; and those few that did consent to our communion, and yet lived scandalously, were excommunicated afterwards. And I hope there were many who had the fear of God, that came not to our communion in the sacrament, some of them being kept off by husbands, by parents, by masters, and some dissuaded by men that differed from us. Those many that kept away, yet took it patiently, and did not revile us as doing them wrong; and those unruly young men who were excommunicated, bore it patiently as to their outward behavior, though their hearts were full of bitterness.

“When I set upon personal conference with each family, and catechising them, there were very few families in all the town that refused to come; and those few were beggars at the town’s ends, who were so ignorant, that they were ashamed it should be manifest. Few families went from me without some tears, or seemingly serious promises of a godly life. Yet many ignorant and ungodly persons there were still among us; but most of them were in the parish, and not in the town, and in those parts of the parish which were farthest from the town. And whereas one part of the parish was inappropriate, and paid tithes to laymen, and the other part maintained the church, a brook dividing them, it fell out that almost all that side of the parish which paid tithes to the church, were godly, honest people, and did it willingly, without contention, and most of the bad people of the parish lived on the other side. Some of the poor men did competently understand the body of divinity, and were able to judge in difficult controversies. Some of them were so able in prayer, that very

few ministers did match them in order, and fullness, and apt expressions, and holy oratory, with fervency. Abundance of them were able to pray very laudably with their families, or with others. The temper of their minds, and the innocence of their lives, were much more laudable than their parts. The professors of serious godliness were generally of very humble minds and carriage; of meek and quiet behavior unto others; and of blamelessness and innocence in their conversation.

“God was pleased also to give me abundant encouragement in the lectures, I preached about in other places; as at Worcester, Clebury, &c., but especially at Dudley and Sheffnal. At the former of which, being the first place that ever I preached in, the poor nailers, and other laborers, would not only crowd the church as full as ever I saw any in London, but also hang upon the windows and the leads without.

“In my poor endeavors with my brethren in the ministry, my labors were not lost; our disputations proved not unprofitable. Our meetings were never contentious, but always comfortable; we took great delight in the society of each other; so that I know that the remembrance of those days is pleasant both to them and me. When discouragements had long kept me from motioning a way of church order and discipline, which all might agree in, that we might neither have churches ungoverned, nor fall into divisions among ourselves; at the first mentioning of it, I found a readier consent than I could expect, and all went on without any great obstructing difficulties. When I attempted also to bring them all conjointly to the work of catechising and instructing every family by itself, I found a ready consent in most, and performance in many.

“So that I must here, to the praise of my dear Redeemer, set up this pillar of remembrance, even to his praise who hath employed me so many years in so comfortable a work, with such encouraging success. O what am I, a worthless worm, not only wanting academical honors, but much of that furniture which is needful to so high a work, that God should thus abundantly encourage me, when the reverend instructors of my youth did labor fifty years together in one place, and could scarcely say they had converted one or two in their parishes! and the greater was this mercy, be-

cause I was naturally of a discouraged spirit; so that if I had preached one year, and seen no fruits of it, I should hardly have forborne running away, like Jonah; but should have thought that God called not to that place. Yea the mercy was yet greater, in that it was of farther public benefit. For some independents and anabaptists that had before conceited that parish churches were the great obstruction of all true church order and discipline, and that it was impossible to bring them to any good consistency, did quite change their minds when they saw what was done at Kidderminster."

"And the zeal and knowledge of this poor people provoked many in other parts of the land. And though I have been now absent from them about six years, and they have been assaulted with pulpit calumnies and slanders, with threatenings and imprisonments, with enticing words and seducing reasonings, they yet stand fast, and keep their integrity. Many of them are gone to God and some are removed, and some now in prison, and most still at home, but none, that I hear of, that are fallen off, or forsake their uprightness.

"Having related my comfortable successes in this place, I shall next tell you by what and how many advantages this was effected, under that grace which worketh by means, though with a free diversity; which I do chiefly for their sakes who would know the means of other men's experiments in managing ignorant and sinful parishes.

"1. One advantage was, that I came to a people who never had any awakening ministry before; but a few formal cold sermons of the curate; for if they had been hardened under a powerful ministry, and had been sermon proof, I should have expected less.

"2. Another advantage was, that at first I was in the vigor of my spirits, and had naturally a familiar moving voice, (which is a great matter with the common hearers,) and doing all in bodily weakness as a dying man, my soul was the more easily brought to seriousness, and to preach as a dying man to dying men. For drowsy formality and customariness doth but stupify

the hearers, and rock them asleep. It must be serious preaching, which will make men serious in hearing and obeying it.

“3. Another advantage was, that most of the bitter enemies of godliness in the town who rose in tumults against me before, in their hatred of Puritans, had gone out into wars, into the king’s armies, and were quickly killed, and few of them ever returned again; and so there were few to make any great opposition to godliness.

“4. Another and the greatest advantage was, the change that was made in the public affairs, by the success of the wars, which, however it was done, and though much corrupted by the usurpers, yet was such as removed many and great impediments to men’s salvation. For before, the riotous rabble had boldness enough to make serious godliness a common scorn, and call them all Puritans and Precisians who did not care as little for God, and heaven, and their souls, as they did; especially if a man was not fully satisfied with their undisciplined, disordered churches, or lay-chancellor’s excommunications, &c. Then, no name was bad enough for him; and the bishop’s articles inquiring after such, and their courts, and the high-commission grievously afflicting those who did but fast and pray together, or go from an ignorant, drunken reader, to hear a godly, able preacher at the next parish, kept religion among the vulgar under either continual reproach or terror; encouraging the rabble to despise it and revile it, and discouraging those that else would own it. Experience telleth us, that it is a lamentable impediment to men’s conversion when it is a ‘way every where spoken against,’ and persecuted by superiors, which they must embrace; and when at their first approaches, they must go through such dangers and obloquy as is fitter for confirmed christians to be exercised with, than unconverted sinners or young beginners. Therefore, though Cromwell gave liberty to all sects among us, and did not set up any party alone by force, yet this much gave abundant advantage to the gospel, removing the prejudices and the terrors which hindered it; especially considering that godliness had countenance and reputation also, as well as liberty. Whereas before, if it did not appear in all the fetters and formalities of the times, it was the common way to shame and ruin. Hearing

sermons abroad, when there were none or worse at home ; fasting and praying together ; the strict observation of the Lord's day, and such-like, went under the dangerous name of puritanism, as well as opposing bishops and ceremonies.

“ I know in these times you may meet with men who confidently affirm that all religion was then trodden down, and heresy and schism were the only piety ; but I give warning to all ages by the experience of this incredible age, that they take heed how they believe any, whoever they be, while they are speaking for the interest of their factions and opinions, against those that were their real or supposed adversaries.

“ For my part I bless God, who gave me even under an usurper whom I opposed, such liberty and advantage to preach his gospel with success, as I cannot have under a king to whom I have sworn and performed true subjection and obedience ; yea, such as no age, since the gospel came into this land, did before possess, as far as I can learn from history. I shall add this much more for the sake of posterity, that as much as I have said and written against licentiousness in religion, and for the magistrates' power in it ; and though I think that land most happy whose rulers use their authority for Christ, as well as for the civil peace ; yet, in comparison of the rest of the world, I shall think that land happy which hath but bare liberty to be as good as the people are willing to be. And if countenance and maintenance be but added to liberty, and tolerated errors and sects be but forced to keep the peace, and not to oppose the substantials of christianity, I shall not hereafter much fear such toleration, nor despair that truth will bear down adversaries.

“ 5. Another advantage which I found, was the acceptance of my person among the people. Though to win estimation and love to ourselves only, be an end that none but proud men and hypocrites intend, yet it is most certain that the gratefulness of the person doth ingratiate the message, and greatly prepareth the people to receive the truth. Had they taken me to be ignorant, erroneous, scandalous, worldly, self-seeking, or such like, I could have expected small success among them.

“ 6. Another advantage which I had, was the zeal and diligence

of the godly of the place ; who thirsted after the salvation of their neighbors, and were in private my assistants, and being dispersed through the town, were ready in almost all companies to repress seducing words, and to justify godliness, and convince, reprove, exhort men according to their deeds ; as also to teach them how to pray ; and to help them to sanctify the Lord's day. For these people that had none in their families who could pray ; or repeat the sermons, went to their next neighbor's house who could do it, and joined with them ; so that some of the houses of the ablest men in each street, were filled with them that could do nothing, or little in their own.

"7. And the holy, humble, blameless lives of the religious sort were also a great advantage to me. The malicious people could not say, Your professors here are as proud and covetous as any ; but the blameless lives of godly people did shame opposers, and put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and many were won by their good conversation.

"8. Our unity and concord were a great advantage to us ; and our freedom from those sects and heresies, with which many other places were infected. We had no private church, and though we had private meetings, we had not pastor against pastor, or church against church, or sect against sect, or christian against christian. There was none that had any odd opinions of his own, or censured his teacher as erroneous, or questioned his call. At Bewdley, there was a church of Anabaptists ; at Worcester, the Independents gathered theirs. But we were all of one mind, and mouth, and way ; not a Separatist, Anabaptist, or Antinomian in the town. One journeyman shoemaker turned Anabaptist, but he left the town upon it, and went among them. Where people saw diversity of sects and churches in any place, it greatly hindered their conversion ; and they were at a loss, and knew not what party to be of, or what way to go, and therefore would be of no religion at all, and perhaps derided them all, whom they saw thus disagreed. But they had no such offense or objection there ; they could not ask, Which church or party, shall I be of, for we were all but as one. Nay, so modest were the ablest of the people, that they never were inclined to a preaching way, nor to make ostentation of

their parts ; but took warning by the pride of others ; and thought they had teaching enough by their pastors, and that it was better for them to bestow their labor in digesting that than in preaching themselves.

“ 9. Our private meetings were a marvellous help to the propagating of godliness, for thereby, truths that slipped away, were recalled, and the seriousness of the people’s minds renewed, and good desires cherished. Their knowledge, also, was much increased by them, and the younger sort learned to pray by frequently hearing others. And here I had opportunity to know their case ; for if any were touched and awakened in public, I should presently see him drop into our private meetings. Hereby also idle meetings and loss of time were greatly prevented ; and so far were we from being by this in danger of schism, or divisions, that it was the principal means to prevent them : for here I was usually present with them, answering their doubts, and silencing objections, and moderating them in all. And some private meetings, I found they were exceedingly much inclined to ; and if I had not allowed them such as were lawful and profitable, they would have been ready to run to such as were unlawful and hurtful. And by encouraging them here in the fit exercise of their parts, in repetition, prayer, and asking questions, I kept them from inclining to the disorderly exercise of them, as the Sectaries do. We had no meetings in opposition to the public meetings, but all in subordination to them ; and under my oversight and guidance, which proved a way profitable to all.

“ 10. Another thing which advantaged us, was some public disputations which we had with gainsayers, which very much confirmed the people. The Quakers would fain have got entertainment, and set up a meeting in the town, and frequently railed at me in the congregation ; but when I had once given them leave to meet in the church for a dispute, and, before the people, had opened their deceits and shame, none would entertain them more, nor did they get one proselyte among us.”

“ 11. Another advantage, was the great honesty and diligence of my assistants.”

“ 12. Another was the presence and countenance of honest jus-

tices of peace," "who ordinarily were godly men, and always such as would be thought so, and were ready to use their authority to suppress sin and promote goodness."

"13. Another help to my success, was that small relief which my low estate enabled me to afford the poor. Though the place was reckoned at near two hundred pounds per annum, there came but ninety pounds, and sometimes only eighty pounds to me. Beside which, some years I had sixty, or eighty pounds a year of the booksellers for my books: which little, dispersed among them, much reconciled them to the doctrine that I taught. I took the aptest of their children from the school, and sent divers of them to the universities; where for eight pounds a year, or ten, at most, by the help of my friends there, I maintained them." "Some of these are honest, able ministers, now cast out with their brethren; but, two or three, having no other way to live, turned great Conformists, and are preachers now. In giving the little I had, I did not inquire whether they were good or bad, if they asked relief; for the bad had souls and bodies that needed charity most. And I found that three pence or a groat to every poor body that asked me, was no great matter in a year; but a few pounds in that way of giving would go far. And this truth I will speak to the encouragement of the charitable, that what little money I have now by me, I got it almost all, I scarce know how, at that time when I gave most, and since I have had less opportunity of giving, I have had less increase.

"14. Another furtherance of my work, was the writings which I wrote, and gave away among them. Of some small books I gave each family one, which came to about eight hundred; and of the bigger, I gave fewer: and every family that was poor, and had not a Bible, I gave a Bible to. I had found myself the benefit of reading to be so great, that I could not but think it would be profitable to others.

"15. And it was a great advantage to me, that my neighbors were of such a trade, as allowed them time enough to read or talk of holy things. For the town liveth upon the weaving of Kidderminster stuffs; and, as they stand in their looms, the men can set a book before them, or edify one another; whereas, ploughmen,

and many others, are so wearied, or continually employed, either in the labors, or the cares of their callings, that it is a great impediment to their salvation. Freeholders and tradesmen are the strength of religion and civility in the land; and gentlemen, and beggars, and servile tenants, are the strength of iniquity. Though among these sorts, there are some also that are good and just, as among the other there are many bad. And their constant converse and traffic with London, doth much promote civility and piety among tradesmen.

“ 16. I found also that my *single life* afforded me much advantage: for I could the easier take my people for my children, and think all that I had too little for them, in that I had no children of my own to tempt me to another way of using it. Being discharged from the most of family cares, and keeping but one servant, I had the greater vacancy and liberty for the labors of my calling.

“ 17. God made use of my practice of physic among them also as a very great advantage to my ministry; for they that cared not for their souls, did love their lives, and care for their bodies; and, by this, they were made almost as observant, as a tenant is of his landlord. Sometimes I could see before me in the church, a very considerable part of the congregation, whose lives God had made me a means to save, or to recover their health; and doing it for nothing so obliged them, that they would readily hear me.

“ 18. It was a great advantage to me, that there were at last few that were bad, but some of their own relations were converted: many children did God work upon, at fourteen, fifteen, or sixteen years of age; and this did marvellously reconcile the minds of the parents and elder sort to godliness. They that would not hear me, would hear their own children. They that before could have talked against godliness, would not hear it spoken against, when it was their children's case. Many who would not be brought to it themselves, were proud that they had understanding, religious children; and we had some old persons of eighty years of age, who are, I hope, in heaven, and the conversion of their own children, was the chief means to overcome their prejudice, and old customs, and conceits.

“ 19. And God made great use of sickness to do good to many.

For though sick-bed promises are usually soon forgotten; yet it was otherwise with many among us; and as soon as they were recovered, they came first to our private meetings, and so kept in a learning state till further fruits of piety appeared.

“20. And I found that our disowning the iniquity of the times did tend to the good of many. For they despised those that always followed the stronger side, and justified every wickedness that was done by the stronger party.” “And had I owned the guilt of others, it would have been my shame, and the hindrance of my work, and provoked God to have disowned me.

“21. Another of my great advantages was, the true worth and unanimity of the honest ministers of the country round about us, who associated in a way of concord with us. Their preaching was powerful and sober; their fruits peaceable and meek, disowning the treasons and iniquities of the times as well as we. They were wholly addicted to the winning of souls; self-denying, and of most blameless lives; evil-spoken of by no sober men, but greatly beloved by their own people and all that knew them; adhering to no faction; neither episcopal, presbyterian, nor independent, as to parties; but desiring union, and loving that which is good in all. These, meeting weekly at our lecture, and monthly at our disputation, constrained a reverence in the people to their worth and unity, and consequently furthered my work.”

“22. Another advantage to me was the quality of the sinners of the place. There were two drunkards almost at the next doors to me, who one by night, and the other by day, did constantly every week, if not twice or thrice a week, roar and rave in the streets like stark mad men. These were so beastly and ridiculous, that they made that sin, of which we were in most danger, the more abhorred.

“23. Another advantage to me was the quality of the apostates of the place. If we had been troubled with mere Separatists, Anabaptists, or others that erred plausibly and tolerably, they might perhaps have divided us, and drawn away disciples after them. But we had only two professors that fell off in the wars; and one or two that made no profession of godliness were drawn in to them. Those that fell off, were such as before, by their want of grounded

understanding, humility, and mortification, gave us the greatest suspicion of their stability ; and they fell to no less than familism and infidelity, making a jest of the scripture and of the essentials of Christianity. And as they fell from the faith, so they fell to drinking, gaming, furious passions, (horribly abusing their wives, and thereby saving them from their errors,) and to a vicious life. So that they stood up as pillars and monuments of God's justice, to warn all others to take heed of self-conceitedness and heresies, and of departing from truth and Christian unity. And so they were a principal means to keep out all sects and errors from the town.

“24. Another great help to my success at last, was the fore-described work of personal conference with every family apart, and catechising and instructing them. That which was spoken to them personally, and which put them sometimes upon answers, awakened their attention, and was easier applied than public preaching, and seemed to do much more upon them.

“25. And the exercise of church discipline was no small furtherance of the people's good : for I found plainly, that without it, I could not have kept the religious sort from separations and divisions. There is something generally in their dispositions, which inclineth them to dissociate from open ungodly sinners, as men of another nature and society ; and if they had not seen me do something reasonable for a regular separation of the notorious, obstinate sinners from the rest, they would irregularly have withdrawn themselves ; and it had not been in my power with bare words to satisfy them, when they saw we had liberty to do what we would.

“It was my greatest care and contrivance so to order this work, that we might neither make a mere mock-show of discipline, nor, with Independents, unchurch the parish church, and gather a church out of them anew. Therefore all the ministers associate agreed together, to practise so much discipline as the Episcopal, Presbyterians, and Independents, were agreed on that presbyters might and must do. And we told the people that we were not about to gather a new church, but taking the parish for the church, unless they were unwilling to own their membership, we resolved to exercise that discipline with all : only, because there are some papists and familists or infidels among us, and because in these times of liberty

we cannot, nor desire to, compel any against their wills, we desired all that did own their membership in this parish church, and take us for their pastors, to give in their names, or any other way signify that they do so; and those that are not willing to be members and rather choose to withdraw themselves than live under discipline, to be silent.

“And so, for fear of discipline, all the parish kept off except about six hundred, when there were in all above sixteen hundred at age to be communicants. Yet because it was their own doing, and they knew they might come in when they would, they were quiet in their separation; for we took them for the Separatists. Those that scrupled our gesture at the sacrament, I openly told that they should have it in their own. Yet did I baptize all their children, but made them first, as I would have done by strangers, give me privately, or publicly if they had rather, an account of their faith; and if any father was a scandalous sinner, I made him confess his sin openly, with seeming penitence, before I would baptise his child. If he refused it, I forbore till the mother came to present it; for I rarely, if ever, found both father and mother so destitute of knowledge and faith, as in a church sense to be incapable hereof.

“26. Another advantage which I found to my success, was, by ordering my doctrine to them in a suitableness to the main end, and yet so as might suit their dispositions and diseases. The things which I daily opened to them, and with greatest importunity labored to imprint upon their minds, were the great fundamental principles of christianity contained in their baptismal covenant, even a right knowledge and belief of, and subjection and love to, God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; love to all men, and concord with the church and one another. I did so daily inculcate the knowledge of God our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, love and obedience to God, unity with the church catholic, and love to men and the hope of life eternal, that these were the matter of their daily cogitations and discourses, and indeed, their religion.

“Yet, I did usually put in something my sermon, which was above their own discovery, and which they had not known before;

and this I did that they might be kept humble, and still perceive their ignorance, and be willing to keep in a learning state. For when preachers tell their people of no more than they know, and do not show that they excel them in knowledge, and easily overtop them in abilities, the people will be tempted to turn preachers themselves, and think that they have learned all that the ministers can teach them, and are as wise as they. They will be apt to condemn their teachers, and wrangle with all their doctrines, and set their wits against them, and hear them as censurers, and not disciples, to their own undoing, and to the disturbance of the church; and they will easily draw disciples after them. The bare authority of the clergy will not serve the turn, without overtopping ministerial abilities. And I did this to increase their knowledge, and also to make religion pleasant to them, by a daily addition to their former light, and to draw them on with desire and delight. But these things which they did not know before, were not unprofitable controversies which tended not to edification, or novelties in doctrine contrary to the universal church; but either such points as tended to illustrate the great doctrines before mentioned, or usually about the right methodizing of them; the opening of the true and profitable method of the creed or doctrine of faith; the Lord's Prayer, or matter of our desires; and the ten commandments, or the law of practice.

“27. Another help to my success was, that my people were not rich. There were among them very few beggars; because their common trade of stuff-weaving would find work for all, men, women, and children, that were able. And there were none of the tradesmen very rich, seeing their trade was poor, that would but find them food and raiment. The magistrates of the town were, few of them, worth forty pounds per annum; and most not half so much. Three or four of the richest thriving masters of the trade, got about five or six hundred pounds in twenty years. The generality of the master workmen, lived but a little better than their journeymen, from hand to mouth, but only that they labored not altogether so hard.

“And it is the poor that receive the glad tidings of the gospel, and that are usually rich in faith, and heirs of the heavenly riches

which God hath promised to them that love him. As Mr. George Herbert saith in his church Militant,

“Gold and the gospel never did agree;
Religion always sides with poverty.”

“One knight, Sir Ralph Clare, who lived among us, did more to hinder my greater successes than a multitude of others could have done. Though he was an old man of great courtship and civility, and very temperate as to diet, apparel, and sports, and seldom would swear louder than “by his troth,” etc. and showed me much personal reverence and respect, beyond my desert, and we conversed together with love and familiarity; yet, (having no relish for this preciseness, and extemporary praying, and making so much ado for heaven; nor liking that which went beyond the pace of saying the common prayer; and also the interest of himself and of his civil and ecclesiastical parties leading him to be ruled by Dr. Hammond,) his coming but once a day to church on the Lord’s days, and his abstaining from the sacrament, as if we kept not sufficiently to the old way, and because we used not the common prayer book when it would have caused us to be sequestered, did cause a great part of the parish to follow him, and do as he did, when else our success and concord would have been much more happy than it was. And yet his civility and yielding much beyond others of his party, sending his family to be catechized and personally instructed, did sway with almost the worst among us, to the like. Indeed we had two other persons of quality, Col. John Bridges, and at last Mrs Hanmer, that came from other places to live there, and were truly and judiciously religious, who did much good; for when the rich are indeed religious and overcome their temptations, as they may be supposed better than others, because their conquest is greater, so they may do more good than others, because their talents are more. But such are always comparatively few.

“28. Another thing that helped me, was my not meddling with tithes or wordly business, whereby I had my whole time, except what sickness deprived me of, for my duty, and my mind more free from entanglements than else it would have been; and, also, I escaped the offending of the people, and contending by any law-suits

with them. Three or four of my neighbors managed all those kinds of business, of whom I never took account; and if any one refused to pay his tithes, if he was poor, I ordered them to forgive him. (After that, I was constrained to let the tithes be gathered as by my title, to save the gatherers from law-suits.) But if the parties were able, I ordered them to seek it by the magistrate, with the damage, and give both my part and the damages to the poor; for I resolved to have none of it myself that was recovered by law, and yet I could not tolerate the sacrilege and fraud of covetous men. When they knew that this was the rule I went by, none of them that were able would do the poor so great a kindness as to deny the payment of their tithes. In my family, I had the help of my father and mother-in-law, and the benefit of a godly, understanding, faithful servant, an ancient woman, near sixty years old, who eased me of all care, and laid out all my money for house-keeping; so that I never had one hour's trouble about it, nor ever took one day's account of her for fourteen years together, as being certain of her fidelity, providence, and skill.

“29. And it much furthered my success, that I staid still in this one place, near two years before the wars, and above fourteen years after; for he that removeth oft from place to place, may sow good seed in many places, but is not likely to see much fruit in any, unless some other skilful hand shall follow him to water it. It was a great advantage to me to have almost all the religious people of the place, of my own instructing and informing; and that they were not formed into erroneous and factious principles before; and that I staid to see them grow up to some confirmedness and maturity.

“30. Lastly, our successes were enlarged beyond our own congregations, by the lectures kept up round about. To divers of them I went so oft as I was able; and the neighboring ministers, oftener than I; especially Mr. Oasland, of Bewdley, who having a strong body, a zealous spirit, and an earnest utterance, went up and down preaching from place to place, with great acceptance and success. But this business, also, we contrived to be universally and orderly managed. For, beside the lectures set up on week days fixedly, in several places, we studied how to have them extend to every

place in the county that had need. For when the parliament purged the ministry, they cast out the grosser sort of insufficient and scandalous ones, such as gross drunkards and such like; and also some few civil men that had assisted in the wars against the parliament, or set up bowing to altars, or such innovations; but they had left in nearly one half the ministers, that were not good enough to do much service, or bad enough to be cast out as utterly intolerable. These were a company, of poor, weak preachers who had no great skill in divinity, or zeal for godliness; but preached weakly that which is true, and lived in no gross, notorious sin. These men were not cast out, but yet their people greatly needed help; for their dark, sleepy preaching did but little good. We, therefore, resolved that some of the abler ministers should often voluntarily help them; but all the care was how to do it without offending them.

“It fell out seasonably that the Londoners of that county, at their yearly feast, collected about thirty pounds, and sent it to me by that worthy man, Mr. Thomas Stanley, of Bread-street, to set up a lecture for that year. Whereupon we covered all our designs under the name of the Londoner’s Lecture, which took off the offence. We choose four worthy men, Mr. Andrew Tristram, Mr. Henry Oasland, Mr. Thomas Baldwin, and Mr. Joseph Treble, who undertook to go, each man his day, once a month, which was every Lord’s day between the four, and to preach at those places which had most need twice on a Lord’s day. To avoid all ill consequences and offence, they were sometimes to go to abler men’s congregations; and wherever they came, to say somewhat always to draw the people to the honor and special regard of their own pastors, that, how weak soever they were, they might see that we came not to draw away the people’s hearts from them, but to strengthen their hands, and help them in their work.

“This lecture did a great deal of good; and though the Londoners gave their money but that one year, when it was once set on foot, we continued it voluntarily, till the ministers were turned out and all these works went down together.

“So much of the way and helps of those successes, which I mention, because many have inquired after them, as willing, with

their own flocks, to take that course which other men have by experience found to be effectual.”*

Such was Baxter as a pastor ; and such were his successes. In answer to the inquiry how far the progress of religion in other places might be supposed to correspond with what he testifies concerning Kidderminster, he says “I must bear this faithful witness to those times, that as far as I was acquainted, where before there was one godly preacher, there were then six or ten ; and taking one place with another, I conjecture there is a proportionable increase of truly godly people, not counting heretics, or perfidious rebels, or church disturbers, as such. But this increase of godliness was not in all places alike. For in some places where the ministers were formal, or ignorant, or weak or imprudent, contentious or negligent, the parishes were as bad as heretofore. And in some places, where the ministers had excellent parts and holy lives, and thirsted after the good of souls, and wholly devoted themselves, their time and strength and estates, thereunto, and thought no pains or cost too much, there abundance were converted to serious godliness. And with those of a middle state, usually they had a middle measure of success. And I must add this to the true information of posterity ; that God did so wonderfully bless the labors of his unanimous faithful ministers, that had it not for the faction of the prelatists on one side that drew men off, and the factions of the giddy and turbulent sectaries on the other side,” “together with some laziness and selfishness in many of the ministry, I say had it not been for these impediments, England had been like in a quarter of an age to have become a land of saints, and a pattern of holiness to all the world, and the unmatched paradise of the earth. Never were such fair opportunities to sanctify a nation lost and trodden under foot, as have been in this land of late. Woe be to them that were the causes of it !”

At this time there was no jurisdiction exercised either in or over the national church of England, other than that which was exercised by the civil government for the time being. The abolition of episcopacy had not been succeeded by the establishment of the presby-

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 83—96.

terian platform, or any other national system. The model framed by the Westminster assembly, had indeed been adopted in London; but it wanted the sanction of law, and was not received with great favor by either ministers or people. In these circumstances, the pastors in Worcestershire formed an association for mutual advice and assistance in all matters relating to their official work, resembling very closely the associations of the congregational ministers in this country. Their example was followed in other parts of England. In effecting this organization Baxter seems to have had an important agency both in his own county and elsewhere. Respecting the men who united in the Worcestershire association, he says, "Though we made our terms large enough for all, episcopal, presbyterians and independents, there was not one Presbyterian* joined with us that I knew of, (for I knew of but one in all the county;) nor one independent, though two or three honest ones said nothing against us; nor one of the new prelatical way, but three or four moderate conformists that were for the old episcopacy: and all the rest were mere catholics, men of no faction, nor siding with any party; but owning that which was good in all as far as they could discern it; and upon a concord in so much, laying themselves out for the great end of their ministry, the people's edification."

In this connection he adds a few remarks on another subject, which well illustrate the true liberality of his own temper. "The increase of sectaries among us, was much through the weakness or the faultiness of ministers. And it made me remember that sects have most abounded when the gospel hath most prospered, and God hath been doing the greatest works in the world: as first in the apostle's and the primitive times; and then, when christian emperors were assisting the church; and then, when reformation prospered in Germany; and lately in New-England where godliness most flourished; and last of all, here when so pleasant a spring had raised all our hopes. And our *impatience of weak people's errors*

* He uses this word here in the party sense common in those times. He means of the Scottish party, zealous for the covenant and the exclusive divine right of presbytery.

and dissent did make the business worse ; while every weak minister that could not, or would not do that for his people, which belonged to his place, was presently crying out against the magistrates for suffering these errors, and thinking the sword must do that which the word should do. And it is a wicked thing in men to desire with the papists, that the people were blind rather than purblind, and that they might rather know nothing than mistake in some few points ; and to be more troubled that a man contradicteth us in the point of infant baptism or church government, than that many of the people are sottishly careless of their own salvation. He that never regardeth the word of God, is not like to err much about it. Men will sooner fall out about gold or pearls, than swine will.”*

In 1654, probably in November, Baxter was called to London to be associated there with several other ministers, as a committee of Parliament, to draw up a statement of the fundamentals of religion. The occasion was this. The constitution of the commonwealth provided that all who “professed faith in God by Jesus Christ though differing in judgment from the doctrine, worship or discipline publicly held forth, shall not be restrained from, but shall be protected in the profession of their faith and exercise of their religion, so as they abuse not this liberty to the injury of others and the actual disturbance of the public peace.” In the first parliament that was convened under this constitution, the entire “instrument of government” was examined and discussed. On the point of religious liberty, the majority in parliament were evidently less enlightened than were the men who framed the constitution. A profession of faith in God by Jesus Christ, it was said, implied a profession of the fundamentals of christianity ; and therefore a large committee was appointed to consider what were the fundamentals of religion, and were empowered to consult with such divines as they might choose for themselves. One of the ministers first invited by the committee to this consultation, was the venerable archbishop Usher ; and when he had declined the service, Baxter was

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 96, 97.

called in his room. Dr. Owen was one of the most respected and able members of this committee of divines ; and though Owen and Baxter had previously had some encounters in the way of theological discussion through the press, there is reason to believe that this was the first time these two great and good men ever came together face to face. Baxter did not arrive till the other ten were already at their work ; but it soon appeared that he had brought with him views of his own, and was well prepared to make them no little trouble.

“I would have had the brethren,” he says, “to have offered the parliament the creed, Lord’s prayer, and decalogue alone, as our essentials or fundamentals, which at least contain all that is necessary to salvation, and have been by all the ancient churches taken for the sum of their religion. And whereas they still said, ‘A socinian or papist will subscribe all this,’ I answered them, so much the better, and so much the fitter is it to be the matter of our concord. But if you are afraid of communion with papists and socinians, it must not be avoided by making a new rule or test of faith which they will not subscribe to, or by forcing others to subscribe to more than they can do, but by calling them to account whenever in preaching or writing they contradict or abuse the truth to which they have subscribed. This is the work of government ; and we must not think to make laws serve instead of judgment and execution ; nor must we make new laws as oft as heretics will misinterpret and subscribe the old ; for when you have put in all the words you can devise, some heretics will put their own sense upon them, and subscribe them. And we must not blame God for not making a law that no man can misinterpret or break ; and think to make such an one ourselves, because God could not or would not. These presumptions and errors have divided and distracted the christian churches ; and one would think experience should save us from them.”*

This style of arguing however was insufficient to change the views with which the committee had begun their work. They reported about twenty propositions as embracing in their judgment

* Narrative, Part II. p. 198.

the fundamentals of the christian religion. "But the parliament was dissolved, and all came to nothing, and that labor was lost." The truth was, Cromwell was determined to adhere as far as possible to the great principle of religious liberty.

Baxter was called to London on this business by the influence of Lord Broghill afterwards earl of Orrery, and lord president of Munster, who was then high in the favor of the protector; and at the house of this friend he was entertained while he continued in the city. "At this time," he says, "the Lord Broghill, and the earl of Warwick brought me to preach before Cromwell the protector; which was the only time that ever I preached to him, save once long before, when he was an inferior man among other auditors. I knew not which way to provoke him better to duty, than by preaching on 1 Cor i. 10, against the divisions and distractions of the church; and showing how mischievous a thing it was for politicians to maintain such divisions for their own ends, that they might fish in troubled waters, and keep the church by its divisions in a state of weakness lest it should be able to offend them; and to show the necessity and means of union. My plainness, I heard, was displeasing to him and his courtiers; but they put it up.

"A little while after, Cromwell sent to speak with me, and when I came, in the presence of only three of his chief men, he began a long and tedious speech to me of God's providence in the change of the government, and how God had owned it, and what great things had been done at home and abroad, in the peace with Spain and Holland, &c. When he had wearied us all with speaking thus slowly about an hour, I told him it was too great condescension to acquaint me so fully with all these matters, which were above me; but I told him that we took our ancient monarchy to be a blessing, and not an evil to the land; and humbly craved his patience that I might ask him how England had ever forfeited that blessing, and unto whom that forfeiture was made? I was fain to speak of the form of government only, for it had lately been made treason, by law, to speak for the person of the king.

"Upon that question, he was awakened into some passion, and then told me it was no forfeiture, but God had changed it as pleased him; and then he let fly at the parliament, which thwarted him; and especially by name, at four or five of those members who were

my chief acquaintances, whom I presumed to defend against his passion ; and thus four or five hours were spent.

“A few days after, he sent for me again, to hear my judgment about liberty of conscience, which he pretended to be most zealous for, before almost all his privy council ; where, after another slow tedious speech of his, I told him a little of my judgment. And when two of his company had spun out a great deal more of the time in such-like tedious, but more ignorant speeches, some four or five hours being spent, I told him, that if he would be at the labor to read it, I could tell him more of my mind in writing in two sheets, than in that way of speaking in many days ; and that I had a paper on the subject by me, written for a friend, which, if he would peruse and allow for the change of person, he would know my sense. He received the paper afterwards, but I scarcely believe that he ever read it ; for I saw that what he learned must be from himself ; being more disposed to speak many hours, than to hear one ; and little heeding what another said, when he had spoken himself.”

“In this time of my abode at the Lord Broghill’s, fell out all the acquaintance I had with the most reverend, learned, humble, and pious primate of Ireland, Archbishop Usher, then living at the earl of Peterborough’s house in Martin’s lane. Sometimes he came to me, and oft I went to him.” “In this time I opened to him the motions of concord which I had made with the episcopal divines, and desired his judgment of my terms which were these : 1 That every pastor be the governor as well as the teacher of his flock. 2. In those parishes that have more presbyters than one, that one be the stated president. 3. That in every market town, or some such meet divisions, there be frequent assemblies of parochial pastors associated for concord and mutual assistance in their work ; and that in these meetings one be a stated, not a temporary, president. 4. That in every county or diocess there be every year, or half year, or quarter, an assembly of all the ministers of the county or diocess ; and that they also have their fixed president ; and that in ordination nothing be done without the president, nor in matters of common or public concernment. 5. That the coercive power or sword be meddled with by none but magistrates. To this sense were my proposals, which he told me might suffice for peace and unity among moderate men ; but when he had offered the like to the

king, intemperate men were displeased with him, and they were rejected, but afterwards would have been accepted; and such success I was like to have."

"I asked him also his judgment about the validity of presbyters' ordination; which he asserted, and told me that the king asked him at the Isle of Wight, wherever he found in antiquity that presbyters alone ordained any, and that he answered, I can show your majesty more, even where presbyters alone successively ordained bishops, and instanced in Jerome's words of the presbyters of Alexandria choosing and making their own bishops, from the days of Mark till Heraclius and Dionysius. I also asked him whether the paper be his which is called "a reduction of episcopacy to the form of Synodical government;" which he owned.

"And of his own accord he told me confidently, 'that synods are not properly for government, but for agreement among the pastors; and a synod of bishops are not the governors of any one bishop there present.' Though no doubt but every pastor out of the synod being a ruler of his flock, a synod of such pastors may there exercise acts of government over their flocks, though they be but acts of agreement or contract for concord one towards another."*

While he was thus employed in London, he preached occasionally to crowded assemblies in several churches of the metropolis, once at St. Paul's before the mayor and aldermen. One of his sermons was taken down, in part, as it fell from his lips, and was thus published; and after his return to his own parish, he was importuned by many letters to publish others. In several instances he complied with these requests.

A favorite hope of Baxter and one on which he expended during these years, no small portion of his prodigious industry, was the hope of seeing a reconciliation and visible union among evangelical christians of different denominations. The spirit of sectarianism and division; the spirit of exclusion which builds up a middle wall of partition in the church of God; and which raises among the multitude of those who should own no master but Christ, the clamor "I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas," was a spirit with which the large and catholic mind of Richard Baxter

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 206, 206.

could have no sympathy. He saw that the points on which the evangelical christians of his day were agreed, were infinitely more important than the points on which they differed; and he felt that while they continued to divide from each other, they would continue to treat with comparative neglect the great truths on which they built their common hopes, and to attach disproportionate importance to their several distinctive principles. He himself belonged to no party. He thought for himself on every subject of controversy; and he saw or thought he saw, in regard to many of the controversies of his day, the peculiar errors and peculiar truths of each opposing party. It seemed to him that men who were so near together might be brought to a hearty fellowship, and to a happy co-operation for the advancement of a common cause. He has left on record a long history of his labors in behalf of unity and catholic communion among christians, including a voluminous correspondence with distinguished men of different parties. The particulars of these efforts hardly come within the design of this narrative; yet we may gather from that part of what he has written concerning his own life and times, a few things which could hardly be omitted here consistently with justice to his character as a christian and as a minister of the gospel.

The principal parties of those days, in the disputes respecting the constitution and government of the church were the Erastians, the diocesans, the presbyterians, and the independents.* Baxter belonged, strictly, to none of them; though generally he acted with the presbyterians, and was high in their confidence, in so much that Wood, the high-church Oxford historian, calls him "the pride of the presbyterian party." His mind was too enlarged and independent, too sensible of the paramount importance of peace and fellowship among christians, to be enlisted for better and for worse with any of the violent parties of a violent age. Moved by the excitement and debate which he could not but see and hear, he set himself to the most serious study of the disputed points; "the result of which was," to use his own words, "this confident and settled judgment, that of the four contending parties each one had some truths in peculiar which the others overlooked, or took little notice of, and each one had their proper mistakes which gave advantage to their

* Some account of these parties has already been given. See pp. 72, 77.

adversaries; though all of them had so much truth in common among them as would have made these kingdoms happy, if it had been unanimously and soberly reduced to practice, by prudent and charitable men.

“The Erastians, I thought, were thus far in the right, in asserting more fully than others the magistrates’ power in matters of religion; that all coercive power by mulcts or force is only in their hands; and that no such power belongeth to the pastors or people of the church; and that thus there should not be any coercive power challenged by pope, prelate, presbytery, or any, but by the magistrate alone; that the pastoral power is only persuasive, or exercised on volunteers.” “But though the diocesans, and the presbyterians of Scotland, who had laws to enable them, opposed this doctrine, or the party at least, yet I perceived that it was but on the ground of their civil advantages, as the magistrate had empowered them by his laws.” “The generality of each party indeed owned this doctrine; and I could speak with no sober judicious prelatist, presbyterian, or independent, but confessed that no secular or forcing power belonged to any pastors of the church as such; and unless the magistrate authorized them as his officers, they could not touch men’s bodies or estates, but the conscience alone, which can be of none but assenters.

“The Episcopal party seemed to have reason on their side in this, that in the primitive church there were some apostles, evangelists, and others, who were general unfixed officers of the church, not tied to any particular charge, and had some superiority, some of them, over fixed bishops or pastors. And though the extraordinary parts of the apostles’ office ceased with them, I saw no proof of the cessation of any ordinary part of their office, such as church government is confessed to be. All the doubt that I saw in this, was whether the apostles themselves were constituted governors of other pastors, or only overruled them by the eminency of their gifts and privilege of infallibility. For it seemed to me unmeet to affirm without proof; that Christ settled a form of government in his church to endure only for one age, and changed it for a new one when that age was ended.”

“And as for the Presbyterians, I found that the office of preaching presbyters was allowed by all that deserve the name of chris-

tians, and that this office did participate, subserviently to Christ, of the prophetic or teaching, the priestly, or worshipping, and the governing power; and that scripture, antiquity, and the persuasive nature of church government, clearly show that all presbyters were church governors as well as church teachers; and that to deny this was to destroy the office and to endeavor to destroy the churches. And I saw in scripture, antiquity, and reason, that the association of pastors and churches for agreement, and their synods in cases of necessity, are a plain duty; and that their ordinary stated synods are usually very convenient.

“And I saw that in England the persons which were called Presbyterians, were eminent for learning, sobriety, and piety, and the pastors so called, were they that went through the work of the ministry, in diligent serious preaching to the people, and edifying men’s souls, and keeping up religion in the land.

“And for the Independents, I saw that most of them were zealous, and very many learned, discreet, and godly men, and fit to be very serviceable in the church. And I found in the search of scripture and antiquity, that in the beginning, a governed church, and a stated worshipping church, were all one, and not two several things; and that though there might be other by-meetings in places like our chapels or private houses, for such as age or persecution hindered to come to the more solemn meetings, yet churches then were no bigger in number of persons than our parishes now, to grant the most; and that they were societies of christians united for personal communion, and not only for communion by meetings of officers and delegates in synods. And I saw if once we go beyond the bounds of “personal communion,” as the end of particular churches, in the definition, we may make a church of a nation, or of ten nations, or what we please, which shall have none of the nature and ends of the primitive particular churches. Also I saw a commendable care of serious holiness and discipline in most of the independent churches. And I found that some Episcopal men (as Bishop Usher did voluntarily profess his judgment to me) did hold that every bishop was independent as to synods, and that synods were not proper governors of the particular bishops, but only for their concord.

“ And for the Anabaptists themselves (though I have written and said so much against them) as I found that most of them were persons of zeal in religion, so *many* of them were sober, godly people, and differed from others but in the point of infant baptism, or at most in the points of predestination and free will and perseverance, as the Lutherans from the Calvinists, and the Arminians from the Contra-remonstrants. And I found in all antiquity that though infant baptism was held lawful by the church, yet some, with Tertullian and Nazienzen, thought it most convenient to make no haste, and the rest left the time of baptism to every one’s liberty.” “ So that in the primitive church, some were baptized in infancy, and some a little before their death, and none were forced, but all left free.”

“ As to doctrinal differences also I soon perceived that it was hard to find a man that discerned the true state of the several controversies; and that when unrevealed points, uncertain to all, were laid aside, and the controversies about words were justly separated from the controversies about things, the differences about things, which remained, were fewer and smaller than most of the contenders perceived or would believe.” “ What I began to write about any of these doctrinal differences, I will now pass by; because it is not such differences that I am now to speak of.

“ I perceived, then, that every party before mentioned having some truth or good in which it was more eminent than the rest, it was no impossible thing to separate all that from the error and the evil; and that among all the truths which they held either in common or in controversy there was no contradiction; and therefore he that would promote the welfare of the church must do his best to promote all the truth and good which was held by every part, and to leave out all their errors and their evil, and not to take up all that any party had espoused as their own.

“ The things which I disliked as erroneous or evil in each party were these :

“ In the Erastians, 1. That they made too light of the power of the ministry and church, and of excommunication.” “ 2. That they make the articles of ‘ the holy catholic church’ and ‘ the communion of saints’ too insignificant by making church communion

more common to the impenitent than Christ would have it, and so dishonored Christ by dishonoring his church." "3. That they misunderstood and injured their brethren, supposing and affirming them to claim as from God a coercive power over the bodies and purses of men, and so setting up *imperium in imperio*; whereas all temperate christians confess that the church hath no power of force, but only to manage God's word unto men's consciences.

"In the Diocesan party I utterly disliked

"1. Their extirpation of the true discipline of Christ, as we conceive, by consequence, though not intentionally; not only as they omitted it, but as their principles and church state had made it impracticable and impossible."

"2. That hereby they altered the species of churches, and either would deface all particular churches, and have none but associated diocesan churches, who hold communion by delegates and not personally, or else they would turn all the particular parochial churches into christian oratories and schools, while they gave their pastors but a teaching and worshipping power, and not a governing.

"3. That hereby they altered the ancient species of {presbyters, to whose office the spiritual government of their proper flocks as truly belonged, as the power of preaching and worshipping God.

"4. That they extinguished the ancient species of bishops, which was in the times of Ignatius, when every church had one altar and one bishop."

He adds many other particulars, such as their setting up secular courts, their vexing honest christians that could not worship by their ceremonies, their permitting ignorant drunken readers to occupy the place of pastors in abundance of churches, their excessive zeal for formalities and ceremonies, and the general tendency of their spirit and measures to the suppression of godliness and the increase of ignorance and profaneness.

"In the presbyterian way I disliked

"1. Their order of lay elders who had no ordination, nor power to preach, nor to administer sacraments. For though I grant that lay elders or the chief of the people, were oft employed to express the people's consent and preserve their liberties, yet these were no church officers at all, nor had any charge of private oversight of

the flocks. And though I grant that one church had oft more elders than did *use* to preach, and that many were most employed in private oversight, yet that was but a prudent dividing of their work according to the gifts and parts of each, and not that any elders wanted power of office to preach or administer sacraments when there was cause.

“2. And I disliked, also, the course of some of the more rigid of them, who drew too near the way of prelacy, by grasping at a kind of secular power; not using it themselves, but binding the magistrates to confiscate or imprison men, merely because they were excommunicated; and so corrupting the true discipline of the church, and turning the communion of saints into the communion of the multitude, who must keep in the church against their wills for fear of being undone in the world. Whereas, a man whose conscience cannot feel a just excommunication unless it be backed with confiscation or imprisonment, is no fitter to be a member of a christian church, than a corps is to be a member of a corporation. It is true they claim not this power as *jure divino*; but no more do the prelates, though the writ *de excommunicato capiendo* is the life of all their censures. But both parties too much debase the magistrate, by making him their mere executioner; whereas he is the judge wherever he is the executioner, and is to try each cause at his own bar, before he be obliged to punish any. They also corrupt the discipline of Christ, by mixing it with secular force. They reproach the keys or ministerial power, as if it were a leaden sword, and not worth a straw, unless the magistrate’s sword enforce it. What, then, did the primitive church for three hundred years? And worst of all, they corrupt the church, by forcing in the rabble of the unfit and the unwilling; and thereby tempt many godly christians to schisms and dangerous separations. Till magistrates keep the sword themselves, and learn to deny it to every angry clergyman who would do his own work by it, and leave them to their own weapons—the word and spiritual keys—and *valeant quantum valere possunt*, the church will never have unity and peace.

“3. And I disliked some of the Presbyterians, that they were not tender enough to dissenting brethren; but too much against

liberty, as others were too much for it; and thought by votes and numbers to do that which love and reason should have done."

A fourth objection in Baxter's mind against the presbyterians, was that "in their practice they would have so settled it that a worshipping church and a governed church should nowhere be the same thing, but ten or twelve worshipping churches should have made one governed church which prepared the way to the diocesan frame."

His objections to the system of the Independents, were, in his own words,

"1. They made too light of ordination.

"2. They also had their office of lay-eldership.

"3. They were commonly stricter about the qualification of church members, than scripture, reason, or the practice of the universal church would allow."

"4. I disliked also the lamentable tendency of this their way to divisions and subdivisions and the nourishing of heresies and sects.

"5. But above all I disliked that most of them made the people by majority of votes to be church governors, in excommunications, absolutions, etc. which Christ hath made to be an act of office; and so they governed their governors and themselves.

"6. Also they too much exploded synods, refusing them as stated, and admitting them but on some extraordinary occasions.

"7. Also they were over-rigid against the admission of christians of other churches to their communion.

"8. And I disliked their making a minister to be as no minister to any but his own flock, and to act to others but as a private man; with divers other such irregularities, and dividing opinions; many of which, the moderation of the New-England synod hath of late corrected and disowned, and so done very much to heal these breaches.

"And for the Anabaptists, I knew that they injudiciously excluded the infants of the faithful from solemn entrance into the covenant and church of God, and as sinfully made their opinion a ground of their separation from the churches and communion of their brethren; and that among them grew up the weeds of many errors; and divisions, subdivisions, reproach of ministers, faction

and pride, and scandalous practices were fomented in their way."

With these views of the principles and characters of the several evangelical denominations of his day, he thought himself called to some special efforts for the promotion of peace and catholic communion. He made it a great object to bring all these parties of christians to see distinctly that the points on which they all agreed were not only more numerous and more important than the points on which they differed, but were also such as to afford ample ground for mutual fellowship and cooperation.

He soon found, however, that besides the diversity of men's opinions and principles, there were other and more serious obstacles in the way of his success. One hindrance he found "in men's company, and another in their seeming interests, and the chiefest of all in the disposition and quality of their minds."

Respecting these three great hindrances, he says, "Some that were most conversant with sober, peaceable, experienced men, and were under the care of peaceable ministers, I found very much inclined to charity and peace. But multitudes of them conversed most with ignorant, proud, unexperienced, passionate, uncharitable persons, who made it a part of their zeal and ingenuity to break a jest in reproach and scorn of them that differed from them; and who were ordinarily backbiters, and bold unrighteous censurers of others, before they well understood them, or ever heard them give a reason of their judgments. And the hearing and conversing with such persons as these, doth powerfully dispose men to the same disease, and to sin impenitently after their example. Especially, when men are incorporated into a sect or uncharitable party, and have captivated themselves to a human servitude in religion, and given up themselves to the will of men, the stream will bear down the plainest evidence, and carry them to the foulest errors.

"And as it is carnal interest that ruleth the carnal world, so I found that among selfish men, there were as many interests and ends, as persons; and every one had an interest of his own which governed him, and set him at a very great enmity to the most necessary means of peace. I found also that every man that had once given up himself to a party, and drowned himself in a faction, did make the interests of that faction or party to be his own. And

the interest of christianity, catholicism and charity, is contrary to the interests of sects as such. And it is the nature of a sectary that he preferreth the interest of his opinion, sect, or party, before the interest of christianity, catholicism, and charity, and will sacrifice the latter to the service of the former.

“But the grand impediment I found in the temper of men’s minds; and there I perceived a manifold difference. Among all these parties I found that some were naturally of mild and calm and gentle dispositions, and some of sour, froward, passionate, peevish, or furious natures. Some were young and raw and unexperienced, and like young fruit, sour and harsh; addicted to pride of their own opinions, to self-conceitedness, turbulency, censoriousness, and temerity, and to engage themselves to a party before they understood the matter; and were led about by those teachers and books that had once won their highest esteem, judging of sermons and persons by their fervency more than by the soundness of the matter and the cause. And some I found on the other side, to be ancient and experienced christians that had tried the spirits, and seen what was of God and what of man, and noted the events of both in the world; and these were like ripe fruit, mellow and sweet, first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy, who being makers of peace, did sow the fruits of righteousness in peace. I began by experience to understand the meaning of those words of Paul, 1 Tim. iii. 6, ‘Not a novice lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.’ Novices, that is, young, raw, unexperienced christians, are much apter to be proud, and censorious and factious, than old, experienced, judicious christians.

“But the difference between the godly and the ungodly, the spiritual and carnal worshippers of God, was the most considerable of all. An humble, holy, upright soul is sensible of the interest of Christ and souls; and a gracious person is ever a charitable person and loveth his neighbor as himself; and therefore judgeth of him as he would be judged of himself, and speaketh of him as he would he spoken of himself, and useth him as he would be used himself; and it is against his charitable inclination to disagree or separate from his brethren.” “And it is easy to bring such per-

sons to agreement, at least to live in charitable communion. But on the other side, the carnal, selfish, and unsanctified, of what party or opinion soever, have a nature that is quite against holy concord and peace. They want that love which is the natural balsom for the churches' wounds. They are every one selfish, and ruled by self-interest, and have as many ends and centers of their desires and actions as they are individual men." "These and many more impediments do rise up against all conciliatory endeavors."

To follow the peace-maker through all the details of his efforts in behalf of union, would carry us beyond the prescribed limits of this narrative. Sectarians were too numerous then among christians of every name, to permit the consummation of such hopes as Baxter seems to have cherished. Selfish men, men of ecclesiastical ambition, men of defective piety, and men of narrow minds, have always had, and for some time to come will doubtless continue to have, in the visible church, influence enough to keep up, in spite of the prayers and endeavors of peace-makers, the spirit of jealousy and party strife, among those who, notwithstanding all their divisions have still one Lord, one faith, and substantially one baptism.

But though he failed to accomplish all the good which he desired, his efforts in behalf of this great object were not lost ; for indeed the God of peace will never permit any sincere endeavor in such a cause, to be utterly in vain. The Worcestershire Association of pastors, of which mention has already been made,* and the many similar associations which were formed contemporaneously in other parts of England, owed their origin in a great measure to the pacificatory labors of Baxter. By these associations for mutual counsel and free fraternal discussion, the attention of hundreds of pastors was turned from strivings and questions of little profit, to the great business of their ministry, the conversion and sanctification of their hearers. Thus too the progress of division was in some degree hindered. The voice of God's truth that had been as it were half-drowned in the clamor of ecclesiastical as well as civil factions, began to be heard in a louder and clearer tone ; and the churches,

* See pp. 126, 127.

enjoying a brief season of something like rest, "were edified, and walking in the fear of God and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost were multiplied." Such was at that time the success of that good man's labors to bring about a union among christians on the ground of mutual toleration and freedom of opinion. But who can say that the immediate result was all? Who can say how many in succeeding ages, having read the record of what he did, have been moved in their several spheres to do likewise? And if by this brief exhibition of his spirit and example, any in these days, should be awakened to the more lively exercise of a kindred spirit, and encouraged in similar efforts, it will afford an additional illustration of the truth that under the providence of the God of peace no such endeavor will utterly fail of its success here, any more than it can fail of its reward hereafter.

But while Baxter was so intent on peace, he was not willing to sit still and see either error, or sectarian and dividing principles, propagated in his own parish to the perversion of his people. When contention was inevitable he showed himself ready to contend effectually. Respecting a controversy which he had with a zealous and able Baptist brother, he gives the following statement.

"Mr. Tombes, who was my neighbor, within two miles, denying infant baptism, and having wrote a book or two against it, was not a little desirous of the propagation of his opinion, and the success of his writings. He thought that I was the chief hinderer, though I never meddled with the point. Whereupon he came constantly to my weekly lectures, waiting for an opportunity to fall upon that controversy in his conference with me; but I studiously avoided it, so that he knew not how to begin. He had so high a conceit of his writings, that he thought them unanswerable, and that none could deal with him in that way. At last, somehow he urged me to give my judgment of them; when I let him know that they did not satisfy me to be of his mind, but went no further with him. Upon this he forebore coming any more to our lecture; but he unavoidably contrived to bring me into the controversy which I shunned. For there came unto me five or six of his chief proselytes, as if they were yet unresolved, and desired me to give them in writing the arguments which satisfied me for infant baptism. I asked them

whether they came not by Mr. Tombes' directions; and they confessed that they did. I asked them whether they had read the books of Mr. Cobbet, Mr. Marshall, Mr. Church, Mr. Blake, for infant baptism; and they told me, no. I desired them to read that which is written already, before they called for more, and tell me what they had to say against them. But this they would by no means do, they must have my writings. I told them, that now they plainly confessed that they came upon a design to promote their party by contentious writings, and not in sincere desire to be informed, as they pretended. To be short they had no more modesty than to insist on their demands, and to tell me, that if they turned against infant baptism, and I denied to give them my arguments in writing, they must lay it upon me. I asked them, whether they would continue unresolved till Mr. Tombes and I had done our writings, seeing it was some years since Mr. Blake and he began, and had not ended yet. But no reasoning served the turn with them, they still called for my written arguments."

The negotiation was concluded by a proposal on the part of Baxter to hold a public discussion in Mr. Tombes' church at Bewdley, to which those of the other party readily assented.

"So Mr. Tombes and I agreed to meet at his church on the first day of January, 1649. And in great weakness thither I came, and from nine o'clock in the morning till five at night, in a crowded congregation, we continued our dispute; which was all spent in managing one argument, from infant's right to church-membership to their right to baptism; of which he often complained, as if I assaulted him in a new way, which he had not considered of before. But this was not the first time that I had dealt with Anabaptists, few having so much to do with them in the army as I had. In a word, this dispute satisfied all my own people, and the country that came in, and Mr. Tombes' own townsmen, except about twenty whom he had perverted, who gathered into his church; which never increased to above twenty-two, that I could learn."*

This however was not the end of the discussion. It was pro-

*Narrative, Part I. pp 96.

longed by the press. Volume after volume came forth ; and still neither of the combatants was driven from the field. These disputants have both gone where they are at peace with each other, and where no principles of close communion bar their mutual fellowship ; but the dispute is still unfinished.

We have seen the diligence of Baxter as a pastor ; and the labor and solicitude which he bestowed upon the general interests of the church. As yet however, only part of his great industry while at Kidderminster has been distinctly noticed. All this labor, all that he did as a minister, except his private conference with families, was only his recreation and the work of his spare hours. " My writings," he says, in a passage already quoted from his narrative,* " were my chiefest daily labor ; which yet went the more slowly on, that I never one hour had an amanuensis to dictate to."

The following enumeration of the works published by him, during the period of about thirteen years now under review, will afford evidence that the preceding statement is not a mere rhetorical flourish. The enumeration is limited to those works which were *published* during his residence at Kidderminster.

1. " Aphorisms of Justification with their Explications. Wherein also is opened the nature of the Covenants, Satisfaction, Righteousness, Faith, Works, etc." 12mo. published in 1649.

2. " The Saint's Everlasting Rest ; or a Treatise of the blessed state of the Saints in their enjoyment of God." 4to. published in 1650. This and the preceding were mostly *written* before his return to Kidderminster, though the date of their *publication* comes within the period we are now reviewing. The occasions on which they were written have already been described.†

3. " Plain Scripture Proof of Infant's Church Membership and Baptism ; being the arguments prepared for, and partly managed in, the public dispute with Mr. Tombes at Bewdley, on the first day of January 1649. With a full reply to what he then answered, and what is contained in his sermon since preached, in his printed books, his MS. on 1 Cor vii.14 : with a reply to his valedictory ora-

*See p. 108. †See pp. 92, 93.

tion at Bewdley, and a Correction for his Antidote." 4to. published in 1650. The occasion of this book may be thus stated. Baxter in the dedication prefixed to the first edition of the *Saint's Rest* alluded to the public dispute at Bewdley, speaking as if he had gained the victory in that conflict. Whereupon Tombes who was one of the most voluminous writers of his party, published what he styled 'An Antidote against the Venom' contained in those allusions. Baxter's idea seems to have been that every thing in the form of argument, must be either answered, or acknowledged as unanswerable; and accordingly he came out, promptly, with the quarto to which was prefixed that long title just recited. "This book," says the author, long afterwards, "God blessed with unexpected success to stop abundance from turning Anabaptists; and it gave a considerable check to their proceedings."* In proof of the interest taken by the public in the controversy, it has been stated that this work in the course of a few years passed through several editions.

4. "Right Method for a Settled Peace of Conscience and Spiritual Comfort; in thirty-two directions." 12mo. published in 1653. "The occasion of it," he says, "was this. Mrs. Bridges, the wife of Col. John Bridges, being one of my flock, was often weeping out her doubts to me about her long and great uncertainty of her true sanctification and salvation. I told her that a few hasty words were not direction enough for the satisfactory resolving of so great a case; and therefore I would write her down a few of those necessary directions which she should read and study, and get well imprinted on her mind. As soon as I begun, I found that it would not be well done in the brevity which I expected; and that when it was done, it would be as useful to many others of my flock as to her; and therefore I bestowed more time on it and made it larger and fit for common use.

"This book pleased Dr. Hammond much, and many rational persons, and some of those for whom it was written; but the women and weaker sort, I found, could not so well improve clear

* Narrative, Part I. p. 109.

reason as they can a few comfortable, warm, and pretty sentences. It is style, and not reason, which doth most with them. Some of the divines were angry with it, for a passage or two about perseverance; because I had said that many men are certain of their present sanctification, who are not certain of their perseverance and salvation, meaning all the godly that are assured of their sanctification, and yet do not hold the certainty of perseverance. But a great storm of jealousy and censure was, by this, and some such words, raised against me by many good men, who lay more on their opinions and party than they ought; therefore, as some would have had me to retract it, and others to leave out of the next impression, I did the latter.”*

This “storm of jealousy and censure” led him to publish, not long after, the work next to be noticed.

5. “Richard Baxter’s Account of his Present Thoughts concerning the Controversies about the Perseverance of the Saints.” A pamphlet in 4to. published in 1653. In this book, he says, “I showed the variety of opinions about perseverance, and that Augustine and Prosper themselves did not hold the certain perseverance of all that are truly sanctified, though they held the perseverance of all the elect; but held that there are more sanctified than are elect, and that perseverance is affixed to the elect as such, and not the sanctified as such.” “From hence and many other arguments, I inferred that the sharp censures of men against their brethren for not holding a point which Augustine himself was against, and no one author can be proved to hold from the apostles’ days till long after Austin, doth assure less charity than many of the censurers seem to have.”

The following passage has been cited from this work as a plain expression of his personal opinion respecting the doctrine in question. “Therefore, notwithstanding all the objections that are against it, and the ill use that will be made of it by many, and the accidental troubles into which it may cast some believers, it seems to me that the doctrine of perseverance is grounded on the scrip-

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 109, 110.

tures and therefore is to be maintained, not only as extending to all the elect, against the Lutherans and Arminians, but also as extending to all the truly sanctified, against Augustine, and the Janse-
nians, and other Dominicans; though we must rank it but among truths of its own order, and not lay the church's peace or communion upon it."*

The explanations of his orthodoxy seem to have been satisfactory; for he adds, "I never heard of any censure against these papers, though the few lines which occasioned them had so much."†

6. "Christian Concord; or the Agreement of the Associated Pastors and Churches of Worcestershire: with Richard Baxter's Explication and Defense of it, and his Exhortation to Unity." 4to. published in 1653. Of this work he says, "When we set on foot our association in Worcestershire, I was desired to print our agreement, with an explication of the several articles, which I did in a small book, in which I have given reasons why the Episcopal, Presbyterians, and Independents, might and should unite, on such terms, without any change of any of their principles; but I confess that the new Episcopal party, that follow Grotius too far, and deny the very being of all the ministers and churches that have not diocesan bishops, are not capable of union with the rest upon such terms. And hereby I gave notice to the gentry and others of the royalists in England, of the great danger they were in of changing their ecclesiastical cause, by following new leaders that were for Grotianism. But this admonition did greatly offend the guilty, who now began to get the reins, though the old Episcopal Protestants confessed it all to be true."

7. "The Worcestershire Petition to Parliament, in behalf of the able, faithful, and godly ministry of this nation," was drawn up by Baxter at a time when the Anabaptists, Seekers, and others were clamorous against the clergy; and it was feared that the Rump Parliament was about to abolish the maintenance of the gospel ministry. This petition was presented by Col. Bridges and Mr. Thomas Foley, in the name of "many thousands, gentleman, freeholders, and

* This quotation is taken from Orme's Life of Baxter. Baxter's work on Perseverance is not before me.

† Narrative, Part II. p. 110.

others of the county of Worcestershire," on the 22d of December 1652, and "was accepted with thanks." Soon afterwards, in 1653, it was published with the answer of the speaker in the name of Parliament, thanking the petitioners for their zeal. "But secretaries greatly raged against that petition; and one wrote a vehement invective against it," which Baxter hastened to answer in the work next to be noticed.

8. "The Worcestershire Petition to Parliament for the Ministry of England, Defended by a Minister of Christ in that County in answer to sixteen queries, printed in a book called, *A Brief Discovery of the Threefold Estate of Antichrist*," etc. 4to. published in 1653. Of this book he says, "I knew not what kind of person he was that I wrote against, but it proved to be a Quaker, they being just now rising, and this being the first of their books, as far as I can remember, that I had ever seen." This Quaker, we are informed by Orme, was none other than George Fox, the father of that sect.

9. "True Christianity; or Christ's Absolute Dominion, and Man's Recovery, Self-resignation, and Subjection, in two Assize Sermons." 4to. published in 1654. "The first was preached before Judge Atkins, Sir Thomas Rous being high slieriff; the second before Sergeant Glyn, who desiring me to print it, I thought meet to print the former with it." In the preface to one of these sermons, he says to the "christian reader," "I have endeavored to show you in both these sermons, that Christ may be preached without antinomianism; that terror may be preached without unwarrantably preaching the law; that the gospel is not a mere promise, and that the law is not so terrible as it is to the rebellious; as also what that superstructure is, which is built on the foundation of general redemption rightly understood; and how ill we can preach Christ's dominion in his universal propriety and sovereignty, without this foundation." Speaking of the style and structure of the work he has this characteristic saying. "It is for the vulgar principally, that I publish it; and I had rather it might be numbered with those books which are carried up and down the country from door to door in pedlar's packs, than with those that lie on booksellers' stalls, or are set up in the libraries of learned divines."

10. "Richard Baxter's Apology," etc. 4to. published in 1654. This work was designed as a reply to the strictures which had been published by different authors, on his Aphorisms of Justification. It was dedicated to his old military friend, "the Honorable Commissary General Whalley." The conclusion of this dedication deserves to be cited, on account of its beauty both of sentiment and expression; and those who are familiar with the subsequent history of the man to whom this language was addressed, will read it with a superadded interest.

"Your great warfare is not yet accomplished: the worms of corruption that breed in us will live, in some measure, till we die ourselves. Your conquest of yourself is yet imperfect. To fight with yourself, you will find the hardest but most necessary conflict that ever yet you were engaged in; and to overcome yourself, the most honorable and gainful victory. Think not that your greatest trials are all over. Prosperity hath its peculiar temptations, by which it hath foiled many that stood unshaken in the storms of adversity. The tempter, who hath had you on the waves, will now assault you in the calm, and hath his last game to play on the mountain, till nature cause you to descend. Stand this charge, and you win the day."*

11. "Richard Baxter's Confession of Faith, especially concerning the Interest of Repentance and Sincere Obedience to Christ in our Justification and Salvation." 4to. published in 1655. This was designed as a farther explanation and defense of his Aphorisms. "In my Confession," he says, "I opened the whole doctrine of antinomianism which I opposed." "And I opened the weakness of Dr. Owen's reasonings for justification before faith in his former answer to me."

12. "Richard Baxter's Advice to the Members of Parliament, in a Sermon preached in Westminster Abbey," published in 1655. "This was," he says, "one scrap of a sermon preached to many members of Parliament, which was taken by some one and print-

* Orme. The Apology of Baxter has not been before me.

ed ; and is nothing but the naming of a few directions which I then gave the parliament men for church reformation and peace.”*

13. “ Making light of Christ and Salvation, too oft the Issue of Gospel Invitations : a sermon, preached at Laurence Jury in London.” 4to. published in 1655.

14. “ A Sermon of Judgment ; preached at Paul’s before the Honorable Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the city of London, Dec. 17, 1654, and now enlarged.” 4to. published 1655. This, in the octavo edition of his practical works, is a treatise of nearly a hundred pages.

15. “ The Quakers’s Catechism ; or the Quakers questioned, their questions answered, and both published for the sake of those of them that have not yet sinned unto death, and of those ungrounded novices that are most in danger of their seduction.” A pamphlet in 4to. published in 1555. The occasion of this little work, he describes in the following words.

“ The Quakers began to make a great stir among us, acting the part of men in raptures, speaking in the manner of men inspired, and every where railing against tithes and ministers. They sent many papers of queries to divers ministers about us ; to one of the chief of which I wrote an answer, and gave them as many more questions, to answer, entitling it ‘ The Quaker’s Catechism.’ These pamphlets being but one or two days’ work, were no great interruption to my better labors, and as they were of small worth, so also of small cost. The same ministers of our country, that are now silenced, are they that the Quakers most vehemently opposed, meddling little with the rest. The marvellous concurrence of instruments telleth us, that one principal agent doth act them all. I have oft asked the Quakers lately, Why they choose the same ministers to revile whom all the drunkards and swearers rail against ? And why they cried out in our assemblies, Come down, thou deceiver thou hireling, thou dog ; and now never meddle with the pastors or congregations ? They answer, that these men sin in the open light, and need none to discover them ; and that the Spirit

*Narrative, Part I. p. 111.

hath his times of severity and of lenity. But the truth is, they knew then they might be bold without any fear of suffering by it: and now it is time for them to save their skins, they suffer enough for their own assemblies.”*

It is hardly necessary to add that the Quakers of that day were exceedingly unlike the sober, peaceable and exemplary moralists who now bear that name. All accounts unite in testifying that the conduct of the fanatics against whom Baxter wrote this pamphlet, was such as outraged all decency, no less distinctly than their principles contradicted both scripture and common sense.

16. “The Unreasonableness of Infidelity, manifested in four Discourses.” 8vo. published in 1655. This is a work of about 450 pages. The author from the time of his connection with the army, had watched with much interest the tendency of certain fanatical sects towards sheer infidelity. The papists who were every where at work in those stormy times, were at much pains secretly, to promote these tendencies, hoping that men would by and by be persuaded that infidelity was the necessary result of every scheme which denied the infallibility of their church. A certain class of republican politicians, whom Cromwell called the ‘heathen,’ were diffusing a sort of philosophic unbelief in the sphere of their influence. Hobbes and Lord Herbert, the fathers of English Deism, were directly assailing christianity by their writings. Baxter was the first who encountered these tendencies by argument. His are said to be the earliest original works in the English language on the evidences of christianity.

The following account of his views and motives in undertaking this work, is from the preface.

“Having the unhappy opportunity, many years ago of discoursing with some of those, [fanatic infidels,] and perceiving them to increase, I preached the sermons on Gal. iii., which are here first printed. Long after this, having again and again too frequent occasion to confer with some of them, the nearness and the hideousness of this deplorable evil did very much force my thoughts that way, especially when I

* Narrative, Part I. p, 216.

found that I fell into whole companies of them, besetting me at once, and who with great scorn and cunning subtlety endeavored to bring my special friends to a contempt of the scripture and the life to come; and also when I considered how many of them were once my intimate friends, whom I cannot yet choose but love with compassion, when I remember our former converse and familiarity: and some of them were ancient professors, who have done and suffered much in a better cause; and whose uprightness we were all as confident of as most men's living on earth. All this did make the case more grievous to me; yet I must needs say that the most that I have known to fall thus far, were such as were formerly so proud, or sensual, or giddy professors, that they seemed then but to stay for a shaking temptation to lay them in the dirt; and those of better qualifications, of whose sincerity we are so confident, were very few. It yet troubled me more that those of them, whose welfare I most heartily desired, would never be drawn to open their minds to me, so that I was out of all capacity of doing them any good, though sometime to others they would speak more freely. And when I have stirred sometime further abroad, I have perceived that some persons of considerable quality and learning, having much conversed with men of that way, and read such books as 'Hobbes' Leviathan,' have been sadly infected with this mortal pestilence; and the horrid language that some of them utter cannot but grieve any one that heareth of it, who hath the least sense of God's honor, or the worth of souls. Sometimes they make a jest at Christ; sometimes at scripture; sometimes at the soul of man; sometimes at spirits; challenging the devil to come and appear to them, and professing how far they would travel to see him, as not believing that indeed he is; sometimes scorning at the talk of hell, and presuming to seduce poor, carnal people that are too ready to believe such things, telling them that it were injustice in God to punish a short sin with an everlasting punishment; and that God is good, and therefore there cannot be any devils or hell, because evil cannot come from good: sometimes they say that it is not they, but sin that dwelleth in them; and therefore sin shall be damned and not they: and most of them give up themselves to sensuality, which is no wonder; for he that thinks there is no greater happiness hereafter to be ex-

pected, is like enough to take his fill of sensual pleasure while he may have it; and, as I have said once before, he that thinks he shall die like a dog, is like enough to live like a dog.

"Being awakened by these sad experiences and considerations to a deeper compassion of these miserable men, but especially to a deeper sense of the danger of weak unsettled professors, whom they labor to seduce, another providence also instigating thereto, I put those sermons on Gal. iii. to the press."*

17. "The Agreement of the Worcestershire Ministers for catechising." 12mo. published in 1656.

18. "Gildas Salvianus: The Reformed Pastor; shewing the nature of the pastoral work, especially in private instruction and catechising, with an open confession of our too open sins," etc. 8vo. published in 1656.

Of the occasion and design of these two works he speaks thus. "About that time, being apprehensive how great a part of our work lay in catechising the aged who were ignorant, as well as children, and especially in serious conference with them about the matters of their salvation, I thought it best to draw in all the ministers of the county with me that the benefit might extend the further, and that each one might have the less opposition. Which having procured, at their desire I wrote a catechism, and the articles of our agreement, and before them an earnest exhortation to our ignorant people to submit to this way: and this was then published. The catechism was also a brief confession of faith, being the enlargement of a confession which I had before printed in an open sheet, when we set up church discipline.

"When we set upon this great work, it was thought best to begin with a day of fasting and prayer by all the ministers, at Worcester, where they desired me to preach. But weakness and other things hindered me from that day; and to compensate that I enlarged and published the sermon which I had prepared for them; and entitled the treatise Gildas Salvianus (because I imitated Gildas and Salvianus in my liberty of speech to the pastors of the churches) or the Reformed Pastor."

* Buxter's Practical Works; London. 1830. Vol. xx. pp. 22, 23.

The Reformed Pastor is one of those works of Baxter which has been most extensively circulated and most profitably read. It is in the hands of thousands of ministers at this day; and it were well if the diligent and devotional study of that book, were made a part of the course of preparation for the ministry in every theological seminary. "I have very great cause," says the author less than ten years after its first publication, "to be thankful to God for the success of that book, as hoping many thousand souls are the better for it, in that it prevailed with many ministers to set upon that work which I there exhort them to; even from beyond the seas, I have had letters of request, to direct them how they might bring on that work according as that book had convinced them that it was their duty. If God would but reform the ministry, and set them on their duty zealously and faithfully, the people would certainly be reformed: all churches either rise or fall, as the ministry doth rise or fall, not in riches or wordly grandeur, but in knowledge, zeal, and ability for the work. But since bishops were restored, this book, is useless, and that work not meddled with."*

19. "Certain Disputations of Rights to Sacraments, and the True Nature of Visible Christianity." Published in 1656. Of this work it is unnecessary to say more than that it is a controversial examination of the question, What is the proper condition of church communion? and that the doctrine which it maintains is that the only condition of membership which any church has a right to require, and the great condition which no church has a right to dispense with, is simply "a creidble profession of true faith and repentance."

20. "The Safe Religion, or Three Disputations for the Reformed Catholic Religion against Popery." 8vo. published in 1657. Of this work he says, "The great advancement of the Papist interest by their secret agency among the Sectaries, Seekers, Quakers, Behmenists, etc., did make me think it necessary to do something directly against popery. So I published three dissertations against them, one to prove our religion safe, and another to prove their religion unsafe, and a third to show that they overthrew the faith by the ill resolution of their faith."

*Narrative, Part I. p. 115.

21. "A Treatise of Conversion ; preached and now published for the use of those that are strangers to a true conversion, especially the grossly ignorant and ungodly," 4to. published in 1657. It was as he says, "some plain sermons on that subject which Mr. Baldwin, an honest young minister that had lived in my house and learned my short hand in which I wrote my sermon notes, had transcribed out of my notes. And though I had no leisure, for this or other writings, to add any ornaments, or citations of authors, I thought it might better pass as it was, than not at all ; and that if the author missed of the applause of the learned, yet the book might be profitable to the ignorant, as it proved, through the great mercy of God."

This work, it may be supposed, is a fair specimen of the author's ordinary preaching. In this point of view it is a book of no small value, not only for "the grossly ignorant and ungodly," but also for divines however "learned." He who reads it carefully will hardly wonder at Baxter's success as a preacher ; and may learn from it more of the manner in which truth should be presented to the minds of men, than from many a learned work on rhetoric and homiletics. The work is at the same time worthy of diligent attention as a theological treatise. It shows what views of 'conversion' were entertained by a man whose success in promoting the conversion of sinners has rarely been equaled.

22. Several single sheets, corresponding in their plan with the publications of our Tract Societies were among the works which he published in 1657. The titles of these were "A Winding Sheet for Popery ;" "One Sheet for the Ministry against Malignants of all sorts ;" "One Sheet against the Quakers ;" "A second Sheet for the Ministry, justifying our calling against the Quakers, Seekers, and Papists, and all that deny us to be the Ministers of Christ ;" and "A Sheet directing Justices in corporations to discharge their duty to God." The industry and spirit of the author has been illustrated by a few words from one of these fugitive publications.

"The Quakers say, we are idle drones, that labor not, and therefore should not eat. The worst I wish you is, that you had but my ease instead of your labor. I have reason to take myself for the

least of saints, and yet I fear not to tell the accuser that I take the labor of most tradesman in the town to be a pleasure to the body, in comparison with mine; though for the ends and pleasure of my mind, I would not change it with the greatest prince. Their labor preserveth health, and mine consumeth it; they work in ease, and I in continual pain; they have hours and days of recreation, I have scarce time to eat and drink. Nobody molesteth them for their labor, but the more I do, the more hatred and trouble I draw upon me. If a Quaker ask me what all this labor is, let him come and see, or do as I do, and he shall know.”*

23. “A call to the Unconverted to turn and live, and accept of mercy while mercy may be had, as ever they would find mercy in the day of their extremity: From the Living God. To which are added Forms of Prayer for morning and evening for a family, for a penitent sinner and for the Lord’s day.” 8vo. published in 1657. “The occasion of this,” he says, “was my converse with Bishop Usher, while I was at London, who much approving my ‘Directions for peace of conscience,’ was importunate with me to write directions suited to the various states of Christians, and also against particular sins. I revered the man; but disregarded these persuasions, supposing I could do nothing but what is done as well or better already. But when he was dead, his words went deeper to my mind, and I purposed to obey his counsel; yet so as that to the first sort of men, the ungodly, I thought vehement persuasions meeter than directions only. And so for such, I published this little book; which God hath blessed with unexpected success beyond all the rest that I have written, except the ‘Saint’s Rest.’ In a little more than a year, there were about twenty thousand of them printed by my own consent, and about ten thousand since; besides many thousands, by stolen impressions, which poor men stole for lucre’s sake. Through God’s mercy, I have had information of almost whole households being converted by this small book, which I set so light by; and, as if all this in England, Scotland, and Ireland, were not mercy enough to me, God, since I was si-

* This quotation is on the authority of Orme.

lenced, hath sent it over on his message to many beyond the seas. For when Mr. Elliot had printed all the Bible in the Indians' language, he next translated this my 'Call to the Unconverted,' as he wrote to us here; and though it was here thought prudent to begin with the 'Practice of Piety,' because of the envy and distaste of the times against me, he had finished it before that advice came to him. Yet God would make some further use of it; for Mr. Stoop, the pastor of the French church in London, being driven hence by the displeasure of superiors, was pleased to translate it into elegant French, and print it in a very curious letter; and I hope it will not be unprofitable there, nor in Germany, where it is printed in Dutch.*

The work is too well known, and too extensively useful at the present day, to need either description or eulogy. I may add, however, to what the author has said in the paragraph just cited, that it has been translated into most of the languages of Europe; and that the men who in the spirit and power of Elliot are now carrying the gospel to every nation, will probably find themselves constrained to imitate his example, till Baxter's Call, "that small book which he set so light by," shall be read in every language of mankind.

24. "The crucifying of the World by the cross of Christ. With a preface to the nobles, gentlemen, and all the rich, directing them how they may be richer." 4to. published in 1658. This was originally an assize sermon preached at Worcester on the request of his early friend Mr. Thomas Foley, then high sheriff of the county. In preparing it for the press, he enlarged it into a treatise of about three hundred pages, which deserves a place among his most eloquent and finished productions.

25. "A Treatise of Saving Faith." 4to. published in 1658. In some of his former publications he had been understood as maintaining "that saving faith differeth not in kind but in degree, from common faith." Dr. Barlow, then provost of Queen's College Oxford, and afterwards bishop of Lincoln, had published, anony-

* Narrative, Part I. pp. 114, 115.

ously, some strictures on this supposed opinion of Baxter's. To these strictures Baxter replied in this work on Saving Faith.

26. "Confirmation and Restauration, the necessary means of reformation and Reconciliation; for the healing of the corruptions and divisions of the churches. Submissively, but earnestly tendered to the consideration of the Sovereign Powers, Magistrates, Ministers, and People, that they may awake, and be up and doing the execution of so much as appeareth to be necessary; as they are true to Christ, his Church and Gospel, and to their own and others' souls, and to the peace and welfare of the Nations; and as they will answer the neglect to Christ at their peril." 12mo. published in 1658. A Mr. Hanmer had written a work on confirmation, urging the necessity of some solemn introduction of persons of adult age to the privileges of church membership, and at his request, Baxter had prefixed to that work an Introductory Epistle. The inquiries which that publication occasioned, led Baxter to take up the subject again, and to discuss it more at large, presenting the testimony of the scriptures. The design of the book is simply to show that no person ought to be admitted to the privileges of adult membership in any church, save on the public profession of his conversion and faith, and that of the satisfactoriness of such profession the pastor ought to be the judge.

27. "Directions and Persuasions to a Sound Conversion, for prevention of that Deceit and Damnation of Souls, and of those scandals, Heresies, and desperate Apostasies, that are consequents of a counterfeit or superficial change." 8vo. published in 1658. This was designed as a sequel to his "Call to the Unconverted." After the Call, I thought," he says, "that according to Bishop Sher's method, the next sort that I should write for is those that are under the work of conversion, because by half-conversions, multitudes prove deceived hypocrites."* He appears to have valued this work more highly than the call, probably he bestowed more labor on it. Yet, owing as he thought to the bad management of the booksellers, it passed through only two or three editions.

* Narrative, Part I. p. 115.

28. **"Five Disputations of Church Government and Worship."** 4to. published in 1658. "I published these," he says, "in order to the reconciliation of the differing parties. In the first I proved that the English diocesan prelacy is intolerable, which none hath answered. In the second, I have proved the validity of the ordination then exercised without diocesans in England, which no man hath answered, though many have urged men to be re-ordained. In the third, I have proved that there are divers sorts of episcopacy lawful and desirable. In the fourth and fifth, I show the lawfulness of some ceremonies, and of a liturgy, and what is unlawful here."*

29. **"The Judgment and Advice of the Associated Ministers of Worcestershire, concerning Mr. John Dury's Endeavors after Ecclesiastical Peace."** 4to. published in 1648. Whatever was done in the Worcestershire Association, Baxter seems to have been the doer of it. Of the occasion of this pamphlet he says, "Mr. John Dury having spent thirty years in endeavors to reconcile the Lutherans and Calvinists, was now going over sea again in that work, and desired the judgment of our association, how it should be successfully expedited; which at their desire I drew up more largely in Latin, and more briefly in English. The English letter he printed, as my letter to Mr. Dury for pacification."†

30. **Universal Concord."** 12mo. published in 1658. This was another of his contributions to the cause of catholic communion. "Having been desired," he says, "in the time of our associations, to draw up those terms which all christian churches may hold communion upon, I published them, though too late for any such use (till God gave men better minds,) that the world might see what our religion and terms of communion were; and that if after ages prove more peaceable, they may have some light from those that went before them."‡

31. **"The Grotian Religion discovered, at the invitation of Mr. Thomas Pierce."** 12mo. published in 1658. In the Universal Concord, he had spoken of Grotius as a concealed papist, and as having designed a reunion of the protestant churches with the church of Rome on the ground of mutual concession; and had in-

* Narrative Part I. p. 117. † Ibid. p. 117. ‡ Ibid. p. 119.

timated that some were still prosecuting that design. This intimation awakened the wrath of one Mr. Thomas Pierce, who replied by an abusive attack on Baxter and the Puritans, making it however his principal business to defend Grotius. To this, Baxter responded in his "Grotian Religion Discovered." The controversy seems to have excited a great interest, as it was in fact an examination of the popish tendencies ascribed to the Arminian prelatists of those days, the followers of Laud. "This book," he says, "the printer abused, printing every section so distant to fill up paper, as if they had been several chapters." Few authors, in these days, would complain of such "abuse."

32. "Four Disputations of Justification." 4to. published in 1658. This work was designed as a further explanation and defense of his supposed peculiar views on that subject. It was a continuation of the controversy which had grown out of the publication of his Aphorisms.

33. "A Key for the Catholics, to open the Juggling of the Jesuits, and satisfy all that are but truly willing to understand, whether the cause of the Roman or Reformed Churches is of God." 4to. published in 1659. "Those that were not prejudiced against this book," he says, "have let me know that it hath not been without success; it being indeed a sufficient armory for to furnish a protestant to defend his religion against all the assaults of the papists whatsoever; and teacheth him how to answer all their books. The second part doth briefly deal with the French and Grotian party that are for the supremacy of a council, at least as to the legislative power; and sheweth that we never had a general council, nor can it be at all expected."*

34. "'Holy Commonwealth; or, Political Aphorisms: opening the true principles of Government; for the healing of the *mistakes*, and resolving the *doubts*, that most endanger and trouble ENGLAND at this time; and directing the desires of sober christians that long to see the Kingdoms of this world become the Kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.'" 8vo. published in 1659. This work was

*Narrative, Part I. p. 113.

published at a moment of peculiar interest. Oliver Cromwell had gone from his throne to the grave. Richard had succeeded to the protectorate without any apparent opposition; but his hand was too feeble to hold the iron scepter which his father had swayed with so great ability. The leaders of the army were making arrangements to regain the power which they considered theirs by right of conquest; and the republican politicians whom the protector had so disappointed and baffled, were again beginning to hope for the speedy consummation of their schemes. Another man in such circumstances, might have waited to see which way the tide would turn, before venturing on any political discussion. But Baxter rarely acted with any reference to personal expediency; and at this very juncture, even when Richard Cromwell had already abdicated, he came out with a book in the former part of which he pleaded for a monarchical form of government, and in the conclusion of which, he eloquently defended the war of parliament against the usurpations of Charles. Thus he equally displeased the republicans on the one hand and the royalists on the other. But let us hear his own account of the book and of the occasion on which it was written.

“The book which hath furnished my enemies with matter of reviling which none must dare to answer, is my ‘Holy Commonwealth.’ The occasion of it was this; when our pretorian sectarian bands had cut all bonds, pulled down all government, and after the death of the king had twelve years kept out his son, few men saw any probability of his restitution, and every self-conceited fellow was ready to offer his model for a new form of government. Mr. Hobbes’ ‘Leviathan,’ had pleased many. Mr. Thomas White, the great Papist, had written his Politics in English, for the interest of the protector, to prove that subjects ought to submit and subject themselves to such a change. And now Mr. James Harrington (they say, by the help of Mr. Neville) had written a book in folio for a democracy, called Oceana, seriously describing a form near to the Venetian, and setting the people upon the desires of a change. After this, Sir H. Vane and his party were about their sectarian democratical model, which Stubbs defended. Rogers, Needham, and Mr. Bagshaw, had also written against monarchy before. In the end of an

epistle before my book of 'Crucifying the World,' I had spoken a few words against this innovation and opposition to monarchy; and having especially touched upon 'Oceana' and 'Leviathan,' Mr. Harrington seemed in a Bethlehem rage; for by way of scorn he printed half a sheet of foolish jeers, in such words as idiots or drunkards use, railing at ministers as a pack of fools and knaves; and by his gibberish derision persuading men that we deserve no other answer than such scorn and nonsense as beseemeth fools. With most insolent pride he carried it, as if neither I nor any ministers understood at all what policy was, but prated against, we knew not what, and had presumed to speak against other men's art, which he was master of, and his knowledge, to such idiots as we, incomprehensible. This made me think it fit, having given that general hint against his 'Oceana,' to give a more particular charge, and withal to give the world and him an account of my political principles, to show what I held as well as what I denied; which I did in that book called 'Holy Commonwealth,' as contrary to his heathenish commonwealth. In which I pleaded the cause of monarchy as better than democracy and aristocracy; but as under God the universal monarch. Here Bishop Morley hath his matter of charge against me, of which one part is that I spake against unlimited monarchy, because God himself hath limited all monarchs. If I had said laws limit monarchs, I might, amongst some men, be thought a traitor and inexcusable; but to say that God limiteth monarchs, I thought had never before been chargeable with treason, or opposed by any that believed that there is a God. If they are indeed unlimited in respect of God, we have many Gods or no God. But now it is dangerous to meddle with these matters, most men say, Let God defend himself.

"In the end of this book is an appendix concerning the cause of the parliament's first war." "And this paper it is that containeth all my crimes. Against this, one Tomkins wrote a book called the 'The Rebel's Plea.' But I wait in silence till God enlighten us."*

For this book the author was reproached and vilified through all

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 118, 119.

the remainder of his life. It was honored by a decree of the University of Oxford, which consigned it to the fire in company with other defenses of British freedom.

35. "A Treatise of Death, the last Enemy to be destroyed : showing wherein its enmity consisteth, and how it is to be destroyed. Part of it was preached at the funeral of Elizabeth, the late wife of Mr. Joseph Baker, Pastor of the church of St. Andrews in Worcester. With some passages of the life of the said Mrs. Baker observed." 8vo. This is a work of nearly a hundred pages, first published in 1659.

36. "A Treatise of Self-denial." 4to. published in 1659. This is a work of nearly four hundred pages, "which," he says, "found better acceptance than most of my other books, but yet prevented not the ruin of church, and state, and millions of souls by the sin of selfishness."

37. "Catholic Unity : or the only way to bring us all to be of one religion. To be read by such as are offended at the differences in religion, and are willing to do their part to heal them." 12mo. published in 1659.

38. "The True Catholic, and Catholic Church described ; and the vanity of the papists, and all other schismatics, that confine the catholic church to their sect, discovered and shamed." 12mo. published in 1659.

These two works were sermons which he had formerly preached, one in London, and the other in Worcester. They came out at a time when the nation was in a revolutionary state. The presbyterians were hoping to regain their political ascendancy. Baxter probably thought it a favorable time to speak once more in behalf of those truly catholic principles, for which he had so zealously labored. These pamphlets were published in December ; in the April following (1660) he came to London, and his labors with his beloved flock he was never permitted to resume.

PART FOURTH.

THE death of Oliver Cromwell, which took place on the third of September 1658, was soon followed by great and amazing changes in the commonwealth which he had so long and prosperously governed. His eldest son, Richard, succeeded to the vacant throne, as peaceably, and received the congratulations of the nation on his accession as unanimously as if he had traced back his title through a line of kings, even to the age of William the conqueror. But Richard had little of the talent and less of the spirit of his father. The hopes of the disappointed republicans began to revive. A parliament was summoned, the majority of which, with the presbyterian part of the army, was friendly to the young protector. The principal officers of the army however, some from disappointed ambition, and some from principle as republicans, soon began to enter into cabals against him. In an unfortunate moment he was persuaded to consent to the meeting of a "general council of officers;" and from that moment the military aristocracy which had governed before Oliver concentrated the power into his own hands, was revived. The parliament, alarmed at this movement, made an ineffectual resistance. The heads of the army demanded of the protector the dissolution of the parliament. Richard saw that his refusal would immediately involve the nation in another civil war; he felt himself unequal to such a conflict; his kind and peaceful temper shrunk from the prospect of bloodshed; and the parliament was instantly dissolved. A few days afterwards he formally abdicated his authority, and retired to private life, probably without a sigh over his fallen grandeur. In the obscurity for which his nature fitted him, he lived, respected for his private virtues, and unmolested, through several succeeding reigns.

The "council of officers" found themselves once more at the head of the British empire. By them, the remnant of the old Long Parliament, the despised and hated Rump, was revived and reinstated in its authority, as it existed immediately before its dissolution by Oliver Cromwell. No movement could have had more effect in wakening universal alarm and indignation. The presbyterians, though they might have been contented under the administration of Richard, were many of them loyalists upon principle, and were all opposed to every thought of such a commonwealth as either the military republicans of the army, or the political enthusiasts of the Rump, would have erected. An extensive conspiracy was entered into between the cavaliers and the presbyterians; and the restoration of the old monarchy was secretly agreed upon, as the only refuge from the anarchy in which the nation seemed likely to be involved. On an appointed day the conspirators were to rise in all parts of England, and Charles had already arrived at Calais, with the intention of immediately passing over and putting himself at the head of the insurrection. But that contemptible and profligate prince was always surrounded by associates as unprincipled as himself, who supported their profligacy by betraying all his counsels to his enemies. Thus this projected effort was disclosed, just in time to prevent that unanimous and simultaneous movement which alone could be successful. The cavaliers, Baxter says, failed to perform their part of the engagement. Sir George Booth and Sir William Middleton, two presbyterian officers of the old parliamentary armies, succeeded in raising about five thousand men in North Wales and the adjoining counties, and took possession of the city of Chester, declaring for a "free parliament." This rising was soon suppressed by a detachment of the standing army; but it was immediately followed by a rupture between the military leaders and the Rump, which ended in another dissolution of that body. The council of officers again took it upon themselves to settle the nation; and by them a committee of safety was appointed with ample powers for the temporary administration of the government. This was in October 1659.

General Monk was a man in whose military talents and fidelity, Cromwell seems to have reposed much confidence; and he had

for many years commanded the army in Scotland. He had peaceably and submissively acknowledged not only the government of Richard, but that of the restored parliament. When that parliament was again dissolved by the same military usurpation which had revived it, Monk, urged by the solicitations of the various discontented parties, made arrangements to march into England, and wrote to the military usurpers there, chiding them for the violence which they had put upon parliament. As he advanced, men of every party looked to him with strong hope. He had been an independent; and the independents, while they were not without fear in regard to his designs, hoped for the establishment of a republic on the foundation of civil and religious freedom. He purged his army of all those officers whom he suspected of any sympathy with the men he was going to encounter; and as these officers were generally anabaptists, the presbyterians began to hope that covenant uniformity would come again out of Scotland in its former glory. The parliament hoped for another restoration of their power; for he had acknowledged their recent authority, and now he seemed to espouse their quarrel. The cavaliers hoped that either by negotiation he might be persuaded, or by the force of circumstances he might be compelled, to declare for their cause. Lambert, who in talent and influence was the head of the new government, marched with a great part of the army to repel this invasion. But every where he found the passions and hopes of the people against him. His own soldiers soon began to desert him. The regiments left in London revolted; and supported by them, the Rump once more assumed the government of the three nations.

But after the ostensible object with which Monk commenced his march into England was already attained, he still continued to advance with all his forces, not waiting for any orders from the restored parliament. The Rump, though not fully assured of his fidelity to them, could not venture to order back their deliverer into his own province. They therefore only expressed their desire that a good part of his forces might be sent back into Scotland. He complied with that request; but still continued his progress with about five thousand men on whom he knew he could depend. The people were generally in his favor; and he encountered no

opposition. It was widely understood that he was in favor of a new and free parliament; though all his public declarations were full of fidelity to the parliament then existing. When he had arrived within twenty or thirty miles of London, he sent a message to the parliament requesting that the regiments then quartered about the city might be withdrawn, lest there should fall out some collision between them and his troops. With this request they were constrained to comply; and on the third of February 1660, Monk, at the head of his army entered the metropolis as in triumph, and quartered with his troops in Westminster.

After a few days of indecision, the general declared himself openly for the presbyterian interest, and for a commonwealth in which there should be neither king nor protector, nor house of lords; and supported by his authority, those members who were excluded in 1648, again took their seats in parliament. The majority of the house were now presbyterians; and as presbyterians, they began to take measures which looked toward the restoration of the monarchy, on such terms and with such limitations as should be agreeable to their party. They appointed a new council of state for the temporary administration of the government; and on the seventeenth of March, having provided for the election of a new parliament to meet on the twenty-fifth of the ensuing month, they passed the act of their own dissolution.

The act for the election of the new parliament, had directed that none who had been in arms against the Long Parliament should be elected. Having put up this defence against the cavaliers, the presbyterians used their diligence to prevent the election of men of republican principles. This diligence of theirs was ill-timed; it amalgamated them for the moment with their oldest, bitterest and most irreconcilable enemies; their own voices were drowned in the clamor which themselves had begun for the king and against the commonwealth; and the result was that in many places the loyalty of the people broke over the barrier of the disabling clause, and elected old cavaliers to negotiate with the king about his restoration and their own, and in many other places the members elected were equally unworthy to be trusted with the liberties of the nation.

When Monk saw that the tide of popular feeling was turned for

the king, he fell in with the current, and commenced a secret correspondence with Charles, advising him to be in readiness for an immediate return.

As soon as the new parliament came together, it was no longer doubtful that all things were ripe for restoration, and for a complete triumph of the old royalists. In a word, the king was recalled without any condition, and without any security for that civil and religious liberty which the people had wrested from his father in a painful conflict. A strange infatuation seized upon the nation; and if Charles had been restored by the bayonets of the French and Spanish monarchies, he could not have come in on terms more favorable to himself and his partisans. He arrived at London on the 29th of May, 1660.

Baxter came from Kidderminster to London, in April, just before the assembling of the parliament. What his business was in coming to the metropolis at that time, he does not inform us. We may safely suppose, however, that he came to be present with his presbyterian friends, and to aid by his counsels and activity in the great matter of the restoration. That the king should be restored, the presbyterians were all agreed; and their vain hope was that by their forwardness in bringing him back, they might secure the establishment of their ecclesiastical system, or at least of something so much like it that they could live under it in peace. This exceeding forwardness of theirs, defeated, as we have already seen, its own object, and gave their bitterest enemies the greatest possible advantage over them. Many of them trembled at the turn which affairs were taking, and at the part which they themselves were acting; but others, in the fever of their loyalty, hoped much from the gratitude of Charles, and trusted to the notion of his having learned wisdom from the fate of his father, and suffered themselves to be duped by the letters which his courtiers procured to be written from France and Holland commending his devotion and his zeal for the protestant religion.

“When I was at London,” says Baxter, “the new parliament being called, they presently appointed a day of fasting and prayer for themselves. The House of Commons chose Mr. Calamy, Dr. Gauden, and myself, to preach and pray with them at St. Mar-

garet's, Westminster. In that sermon, I uttered some passages which were afterward matter of some discourse. Speaking of our differences and the way to heal them, I told them that, whether we should be loyal to our king was none of our differences. In that, we were all agreed; it being not possible that a man should be true to the protestant principles and not be loyal; as it was impossible to be true to the Papist principles, and to be loyal. And for the concord now wished in matters of church government, I told them it was easy for moderate men to come to a fair agreement, and that the late reverend Primate of Ireland and myself had agreed in half an hour. I remember not the very words, but you may read them in the sermon, which was printed by order of the House of Commons." "The next morning after this day of fasting, the parliament unanimously voted home the king."

"The city of London, about that time, was to keep a day of solemn thanksgiving for General Monk's success; and the lord mayor and aldermen desired me to preach before them at St. Paul's church; wherein I so endeavored to show the value of that mercy, as to show also, how sin and men's abuse might turn it into matter of calamity, and what should be right bounds and qualifications of that joy. The moderate were pleased with it; the fanatics were offended with me for keeping such a thanksgiving; and the diocesan party thought I did suppress their joy. The words may be seen in the sermon ordered to be printed.

"But the other words, about my agreement with Bishop Usher, in the sermon before the parliament, put me to most trouble. For presently many moderate episcopal divines came to me to know what those terms of our agreement were. And thinking verily that others of their party had been as moderate as themselves, they entered upon debates for our general concord; and we agreed as easily among ourselves in private, as if almost all our differences were at an end. Among others, I had speech about it with Dr. Gauden, who promised to bring Dr. Morley and many more of that party to meet with some of the other party at Dr. Bernard's lodgings. There came none on that side but Dr. Gauden and Dr. Bernard; and none of the other side but Dr. Manton and myself; and so little was done, but only desires of concord expressed." "Thus men were every day talking of concord, but to little purpose as appeared in the issue."

“ When the king was sent for by the parliament, certain divines, with others, were also sent by the parliament and city to him into Holland : viz. Mr. Calamy, Dr. Manton, Mr. Bowles, and divers other ; and some went voluntarily ; to whom his majesty gave such encouraging promises of peace, as raised some of them to high expectations. And when he came in, as he passed through the city towards Westminster, the London ministers in their places attended him with acclamations, and by the hands of old Mr. Arthur Jackson, presented him with a richly adorned Bible, which he received, and told them, it should be the rule of his actions.”

For a while after the restoration it seemed necessary to cajole the presbyterians with the hope of an improved liturgy and of such changes in respect to episcopacy as would admit of their being included within the pale of the establishment. With this view ten or twelve of the leading presbyterian ministers were nominated to be the king's chaplains in ordinary. Mr. Calamy, and Dr. Reynolds, were first appointed ; soon afterwards Mr. Ash, and Mr. Baxter ; then Dr. Spurstow, Dr. Wallis, Dr. Bates and others. None of them however were ever called to preach at court except Calamy, Reynolds, Baxter, and Spurstow, each of them a single sermon. Baxter's sermon before the king was published, and was afterwards included in his work entitled the ‘Life of Faith.’ Not many kings, since King Agrippa, have had the advantage of hearing the word of God so plainly and powerfully preached, as Baxter preached it to King Charles II. on that occasion. The discourse was evidently written with more attention to style than the author ordinarily bestowed on such matters ; yet in its bold and pungent exhibition of the truth, it is like all his other writings. The sermon contains no direct address to the king, nor even one distinct allusion to him. But there are many passages, pointed in that peculiar way which must have made them felt by the monarch and his profligate attendants. “ Faith,” said the preacher, “ is the wisdom of the soul ; and unbelief and sensuality are its blindness, folly and brutishness.” “ Will you persuade us that the man is wise, that can climb a little higher than his neighbors, that he may have the greater fall ? That is attended in his way to hell with greater pomp and state than others ? That can

sin more syllogistically and rhetorically than the vulgar; and more prudently and gravely run into damnation; and can learnedly defend his madness, and prove that he is safe at the brink of hell? Would you persuade us that he is wise, that contradicts the God and rule of wisdom, and that parts with heaven for a few merry hours, and hath not wit to save his soul? When they see the end, and are arrived at eternity, let them boast of their wisdom, as they find cause: we will take them then for more competent judges. Let the eternal God be the portion of my soul; let heaven be my inheritance and hope; let Christ be my Head, and the promise my security, let faith be my wisdom, and love be my very heart and will, and patient, persevering obedience be my life; and then I can spare the wisdom of the world, because I can spare the trifles that it seeks, and all that they are like to get by it."

Not long after the king's return, Baxter, in an interview with Lord Broghill and the earl of Manchester, two noblemen who though known as presbyterians were men of some influence at court on account of their great services in promoting the restoration, spoke of the conversations which he had held with some episcopal divines, respecting union in the church; and urged the importance of a conference between the leading men of the two parties for the sake of finding on what terms a union might be effected. On this suggestion Broghill "proposed to the king a conference for an agreement;" and within a few days Baxter and Calamy were informed that the king was pleased with that proposal, and was resolved to further it. This led to a personal interview between the king and his ten presbyterian chaplains, which took place about the middle of June at the earl of Manchester's lodgings. Of the part which Baxter acted in this interview, we have a full account from his own pen.

"We exercised more boldness, at first, than afterwards would have been borne. When some of the rest had congratulated his majesty's happy Restoration, and declared the large hope which they had of a cordial union among all dissenters by his means, I presumed to speak to him of the concernments of religion, and how far we were from desiring the continuance of any factions or parties in the church, and how much a happy union would conduce to the good of the land, and to his majesty's satisfaction; and though there

were turbulent, fanatic persons in his dominions, yet that those ministers and godly people whose peace we humbly craved of him were no such persons ; but such as longed after concord, and were truly loyal to him, and desired no more than to live under him a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. And whereas there were differences between them and their brethren, about some ceremonies or discipline of the church, we humbly craved his majesty's favor for the ending of those differences ; it being easy for him to interpose, that so the people might not be deprived of their faithful pastors, nor ignorant, scandalous, unworthy ones obtruded on them.

“ I presumed to tell him, that the people we spoke for were such as were contented with an interest in heaven, and the liberty and advantages of the gospel to promote it ; and that if these were taken from them, and they were deprived of their faithful pastors, and liberty of worshipping God, they would take themselves as undone in this world, whatever plenty else they should enjoy ; and the hearts of his most faithful subjects, who hoped for his help, would even be broken ; and we doubted not but his majesty desired to govern a people made happy by him, and not a broken hearted people who took themselves to be undone by the loss of that which is dearer to them than all the riches of the world. I presumed to tell him, that the late usupers that were over us so well understood their own interest, that to promote it, they had found the way of doing good to be the most effectual means ; and had placed and encouraged many thousand faithful ministers in the church, even such as detested their usurpation ; and so far had they attained their ends hereby, that it was the principal means of their interest in the people, and the good opinion that many had conceived of them ; and those of them that had taken the contrary course had thereby broken themselves in pieces. Wherefore, I humbly craved his majesty, that as he was our lawful king, in whom all his people were prepared to centre, so he would be pleased to undertake this blessed work of promoting their holiness and concord ; for it was not faction or disobedience which we desired him to indulge ; and that he would never suffer himself to be tempted to undo the good which Cromwell, or any other had done, because they were usur-

pers that did it ; or discountenance a faithful ministry, because his enemies had set them up ; but that he would rather outgo them in doing good, and opposing and rejecting the ignorant and ungodly, of what opinion or party soever, for the people whose cause we recommended to him, had their eyes on him as the officer of God, to defend them in the possession of the helps of their salvation ; which if he were pleased to vouchsafe them, their estates and lives would be cheerfully offered to his service.

“ And I humbly besought him that he would never suffer his subjects to be tempted to have favorable thoughts of the late usurpers, by seeing the vice indulged which they suppressed, or the godly ministers of the gospel discountenanced whom they encouraged ; for the common people are apt to judge of governors by the effects, even by the good or evil which they feel, and they will take him to be the best governor who doth them most good, and him to be the worst who doth them most hurt. And all his enemies could not teach him a more effectual way to restore the reputation and honor of the usurpers than to do worse than they, and destroy the good which they had done.” “ And, again, I humbly craved that no misrepresentations might cause him to believe, that because some fanatics have been factious and disloyal, therefore the religious people in his dominions, who are most careful of their souls, are such, though some of them may be dissatisfied about some forms and ceremonies in God’s worship, which others use : and that none of them might go under so ill a character with him, by misreports behind their backs, till it were proved of them personally, or they had answered for themselves : for we, that better knew them than those likely to be their accusers, did confidently testify to his majesty on their behalf, that they are the resolved enemies of sedition, rebellion, disobedience, and divisions, which the world should see, and their adversaries be convinced of, if his majesty’s wisdom and clemency did but remove those occasions of scruple in some points of discipline and worship of God, which give advantage to others to call all dissenters factious and disobedient, how loyal and peaceable soever.

“ I, further, humbly craved, that the freedom and plainness of these expressions to his majesty might be pardoned, as being ex-

tracted by the present necessity, and encouraged by our revived hopes. I told him also, that it was not for presbyterians, or any party, as such, that we were speaking, but for the religious part of his subjects as such, than whom no prince on earth had better. I also told him how considerable a part of the kingdom he would find them to be; and of what great advantage their union would be to his majesty, to the people, and to the bishops themselves, and how easily it might be procured—by making only things necessary to be the terms of union—by the true exercise of church discipline against sin,—and by not casting out the faithful ministers that must exercise it, and obtruding unworthy men upon the people: and how easy it was to avoid the violating of men's solemn vows and covenants, without hurt to any others. And finally, I requested that we might be heard to speak for ourselves, when any accusations were brought against us.

“These, with some other such things, I then spake, when some of my brethren had spoken first. Mr. Simeon Ash also spake much to the same purpose, and of all our desires of his majesty's assistance in our desired union. The king gave us not only a free audience, but as gracious an answer as we could expect; professing his gladness to hear our inclinations to agreement, and his resolution to do his part to bring us together; and that it must not be by bringing one party over to the other, but by abating somewhat on both sides, and meeting in the midway; and that if it were not accomplished, it should be owing to ourselves and not to him. Nay, that he was resolved to see it brought to pass, and that he would draw us together himself, with some more to that purpose. Insomuch that old Mr. Ash burst out into tears of joy, and could not forbear expressing what gladness this promise of his majesty had put into his heart.”*

About the same time the king required them to draw up, and bring to him their own proposals for an agreement with the episcopal party, on the subject of church government. They told him they were only a few individuals, and could not undertake to represent the opinions or the wishes of their brethren; and therefore

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 230, 231.

desired leave to consult with their brethren in the country. This was refused on the ground that it would take too much time, and would make too much noise. He assured them that his intention was only to consult with a few individuals of each party. On their particular request he promised them that when they offered their concessions, the brethren on the other side should bring in theirs, and should state the utmost that they could yield for the sake of concord.

Accordingly they held a few meetings at Sion College, the usual place of meeting for the London ministers. Their consultations were with open doors, and as many of their brethren as chose, came to assist them. They soon agreed on their proposals; and the extent of their concessions may be judged of by the fact that the papers which they finally presented to the king were drawn up mostly by Baxter, and by Dr. Reynolds and Dr. Worth, both of whom were afterwards dignitaries in the church of England. The amount of their requests was that episcopacy might be reduced to the form drawn up and proposed to Charles I. by Archbishop Usher in the year 1641; a scheme in which the prelate became little more than a stated president in the synod of the presbyters, having the power of a negative voice on all their acts.

When they went to the king with these proposals, expecting of course to meet there some divines of the other party, with their proposals for accomodation and union, they found not one of them there. "Yet it was not fit for us," says Baxter, "to expostulate or complain. But his majesty very graciously renewed his professions—I must not call them promises—that he would bring us together, and see that the bishops should come down and yield on their parts. When he had heard our papers, he seemed well pleased with them, and told us he was glad we were for a liturgy and yielded to the *essence* of episcopacy, and therefore he doubted not of our agreement with much more; which we thought meet to recite in our following addresses by way of gratitude, and for other reasons easy to be conjectured."

After waiting a while for the promised proposals of the opposite party, they received, instead of what they expected, only a sharp and controversial reply to the papers which they had offered. The

bishops had determined to make no proposal but that of entire conformity to the old episcopal establishment. Against this paper, Baxter, at the request of his brethren, drew up a defense of their proposals. But afterwards it was judged impolitic to provoke them by a reply such as he had prepared.

Not long afterwards they were informed that another course had been chosen; and that the king would publish, in the form of a royal declaration, all his intentions on the subject of ecclesiastical affairs. This they were to see before it should be published, that they might inform the king of whatever might be in their view inconsistent with the desired concord. A draught of the proposed declaration was accordingly sent them by the Lord Chancellor Hyde (afterwards earl of Clarendon.) Having perused it, they saw that it would not serve the purpose professed. They drew up their objections in the form of a petition to the king, the paper being prepared by the ready pen of Baxter, and thoroughly revised and amended by his brethren, who feared that the boldness and plainness which he had used would give offense. This petition being delivered to the lord chancellor, was still so ungrateful to his feelings that he never called them to present it to the king. Instead of that, he proposed to them to present the precise alterations in the royal declaration which they considered absolutely necessary. With this proposal they complied. And on an appointed day, they met the king at the lord chancellor's house, with several of the bishops and lords. "The business of the day," says Baxter, "was not to dispute; but as the lord chancellor read over the declaration, each party was to speak to what they disliked, and the king to determine how it should be, as liked himself." "The great matter which we stopped at was the word *consent*, where the bishop is to confirm 'by the consent of the pastor of that church;' and the king would by no means pass the word 'consent' either there or in the point of ordination or censures, because it gave the ministers a negative voice."

In connection with this interview, one anecdote recorded by Baxter deserves to be repeated, as it helps to illustrate the character of all the parties concerned. The king was already, as there is much reason to believe, a secret papist; at least he was determin-

ed to go as far as he dared, in promoting the interests of the papists. The bishops and other courtiers, had no disposition to object to what they knew to be his wishes. The presbyterians with all their zeal for their own liberty, had not yet learned the great principle of universal toleration against which they had so zealously contended in the days of the Commonwealth; and Richard Baxter was always too boldly conscientious not to speak his mind whatever it might cost him.

“The most of the time being spent thus in speaking to particulars of the declaration, as it was read, when we came to the end, the lord chancellor drew out another paper, and told us that the king had been petitioned also by the Independents and Anabaptists; and though he knew not what to think of it himself, and did not very well like it, yet something he had drawn up which he would read to us, and desire us also to give our advice about it. Thereupon he read, as an addition to the declaration, ‘that others also be permitted to meet for religious worship, so be it they do it not to the disturbance of the peace; and that no justice of peace or officer disturb them.’ When he had read it, he again desired them all to think on it, and give their advice; but all were silent. The Presbyterians all perceived, as soon as they heard it, that it would secure the liberty of the Papists; and Dr. Wallis whispered me in the ear, and entreated me to say nothing, for it was an odious business, but to let the bishops speak to it. But the bishops would not speak a word, nor any one of the Presbyterians, and so we were like to have ended in silence. I knew, if we consented to it, it would be charged on us, that we spake for a toleration of Papists and sectaries: yet it might have lengthened out our own. And if we spake against it, all sects and parties would be set against us as the causers of their sufferings, and as a partial people that would have liberty ourselves, but would have no others have it with us. At last, seeing the silence continue, I thought our very silence would be charged on us as consent, if it went on, and therefore I only said this: ‘That this reverend brother, Dr. Gunning, even now speaking against sects, had named the Papists and the Socinians: for our parts, we desired not favor to ourselves alone, and rigorous severity we desired against none.’ As we humbly thanked

his majesty for his indulgence to ourselves, so we distinguished the tolerable parties from the intolerable. For the former, we humbly craved just lenity and favor, but for the latter, such as the two sorts named before by that reverend brother, for our parts, we could not make their toleration our request.' To which his majesty said, 'there were laws enough against the Papists;' to which I replied, that we understood the question to be, whether those laws should be executed on them or not. And so his majesty broke up the meeting of that day."

"When I went out from the meeting, I went dejected, as being fully satisfied that the form of government in that declaration would not be satisfactory, nor attain that concord which was our end, because the pastors had no government of the flocks; and I was resolved to meddle no more in the business, but patiently suffer with other dissenters. But two or three days after, I met the king's declaration cried about the streets, and I presently stepped into a house to read it; and seeing the word *consent* put in about confirmation and sacrament, though not as to jurisdiction, and seeing the *pastoral persuasive power* of governing left to all the ministers with the rural dean, and some more amendments, I wondered how it came to pass, but was exceeding glad of it; as perceiving that now the terms were, though not such as we desired, such as any sober, honest minister might submit to. I presently resolved to do my best to persuade all, according to my interest and opportunity, to conform according to the terms of this declaration, and cheerfully to promote the concord of the church, and brotherly love which this concord doth bespeak."

"Having frequent business with the lord chancellor about other matters, I was going to him when I met the king's declaration in the street; and I was so much pleased with it, that having told him why I was so earnest to have had it suited to the desired end, I gave him hearty thanks for the additions, and told him that if the liturgy were but altered as the declaration promised, and this settled and continued to us by a law, and not reversed, I should take it to be my duty to do my best to procure the full consent of others, and promote our happy concord on these terms; and should rejoice to see the day when factions and parties may all be swallowed

up in unity, and contentions turned to brotherly love. At that time he began to offer me a bishoprick, of which more anon.”*

This rejoicing in the king’s declaration was altogether premature. The whole of this movement was designed only to gain time, to keep the Presbyterians quiet with vain hopes, and to divide the more moderate from the more zealous. This was the policy of the court party, while their single intention was not only to bring every thing back to the old footing, but to make the yoke of uniformity heavier than before. A part of the same policy was, to bring over or at least to silence some of the leaders whom they feared, by giving them preferments in the church. Of the negotiation on this subject Baxter gives the following account.

“A little before the meeting about the king’s declaration, Colonel Birch came to me, as from the Lord Chancellor, to persuade me to take the bishopric of Hereford, for he had bought the bishop’s house at Whitburne, and thought to make a better bargain with me than with another, and, therefore, finding that the lord chancellor intended me the offer of one, he desired it might be that. I thought it best to give them no positive denial till I saw the utmost of their intents: and I perceived that Colonel Birch came privately, that a bishopric might not be publicly refused, and to try whether I would accept it, that else it might not be offered me; for he told me that they would not bear such a repulse. I told him that I was resolved never to be bishop of Hereford, and that I did not think I should ever see cause to take any bishopric; but I could give no positive answer till I saw the king’s resolutions about the way of church government: for if the old diocesan frame continued, he knew we could never accept or own it. After this, not having a flat denial, he came again and again to Dr. Reynolds, Mr. Calamy, and myself together, to importune us all to accept the offer, for the bishopric of Norwich was offered to Dr. Reynolds, and Coventry and Litchfield to Mr. Calamy; but he had no positive answer, but the same from me as before. At last, the day that the king’s declaration came out, when I was with the lord

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 276, 279.

chancellor, who did all, he asked me whether I would accept of a bishopric; I told him that if he had asked me that question the day before, I could easily have answered him that in conscience I could not do it; for though I would live peaceably under whatever government the king should set up, I could not have a hand in executing it. But having, as I was coming to him, seen the king's declaration, and seeing that by it the government is so far altered as it is, I took myself for the church's sake exceedingly beholden to his lordship for those moderations; and my desire to promote the happiness of the church, which that moderation tendeth to, did make me resolve to take that course which tendeth most thereto. Whether to take a bishopric by the way, I was in doubt, and desired some further time for consideration. But if his lordship would procure us the settlement of the matter of that declaration, by passing it into a law, I promised him to take that way in which I might most serve the public peace.

"Dr. Reynolds, Mr. Calamy, and myself, had some speeches oft together about it; and we all thought that a bishopric might be accepted according to the description of the declaration, without any violation of the covenant, or owning the ancient prelacy: but all the doubt was whether this declaration would be made a law as was then expected, or whether it were but a temporary means to draw us on till we came up to all the diocesans desired. Mr. Calamy desired that we might all go together, and all refuse or all accept it.

"But by this time the rumor of it fled abroad, and the voice of the city made a difference. For though they wished that none of us should be bishops, yet they said Dr. Reynolds and Mr. Baxter, being known to be for moderate episcopacy, their acceptance would be less scandalous; but if Mr. Calamy should accept it, who had preached, and written, and done so much against it (which were then at large recited,) never Presbyterian would be trusted for his sake. So that the clamor was very loud against his acceptance of it: and Mr. Matthew Newcomen, his brother-in-law, and many more, wrote to me earnestly to dissuade him.

"For my own part, I resolved against it at the first, but not as a thing which I judged unlawful in itself, as described in the king's

declaration : but 1. I knew that it would take me off my writing. 2. I looked to have most of the godly ministers cast out ; and what good could be done by ignorant, vile, incapable men ? 3. I feared this declaration was but for a present use, and that shortly it would be revoked or nullified. 4. And if so, I doubted not but the laws would prescribe such work for bishops, in silencing ministers, and troubling honest Christians for their consciences, and ruling the vicious with greater lenity, as that I had rather have the meanest employment among men. 5. My judgment was also fully resolved against the lawfulness of the old diocesan frame.

“ But when Dr. Reynolds and Mr. Calamy asked my thoughts, I told them that, distinguishing between what is simply, and what is by accident, evil, I thought that as episcopacy is described in the king’s declaration, it is lawful when better cannot be had ; but yet scandal might make it unfit for some men more than others. To Mr. Calamy therefore I would give no counsel, but for Dr. Reynolds, I persuaded him to accept it, so be it he would publicly declare that he took it on the terms of the king’s declaration, and would lay it down when he could no longer exercise it on those terms. Only I left it to his consideration whether it would be better to stay till he saw what they would do with the declaration ; and for myself, I was confident I should see cause to refuse it.

“ When I came to the lord chancellor the next day save one, he asked me of my resolution, and put me to it so suddenly, that I was forced to delay no longer, but told him that I could not accept it for several reasons. And it was not the least that I thought I could better serve the church without it, if he would but prosecute the establishment of the terms granted. And because I thought it would be ill taken if I refused it upon any but acceptable reasons, and also that writing would serve best against misreports hereafter, I the next day put a letter into the lord chancellor’s hand, which he took in good part ; in which I concealed most of my reasons, but gave the best, and used more freedom in my further requests than I expected should have any good success.”

“ Mr. Calamy blamed me for giving in my denial alone, before we had resolved together what to do. But I told him the truth, that being upon other necessary business with the lord chancellor,

he put me to it on the sudden, so that I could not conveniently delay my answer.

“Dr. Reynolds almost as suddenly accepted, saying, that some friend had taken out the conge d’elire for him without his knowledge. But he read to me a profession directed to the king, which he had written, where he professed that he took a bishop and a presbyter to differ not *ordine* but *gradu*; that a bishop was but the chief presbyter, and that he was not to ordain or govern but with his presbyters’ assistance and consent; that he accepted of the place as described in the king’s declaration, and not as it stood before in England; and that he would no longer hold or exercise it than he could do it on these terms. To this sense it was, and he told me that he would offer it to the king when he accepted of the place; but whether he did or not I cannot tell. He died in the bishopric of Norwich, an. 1676.”

“Mr. Calamy long suspended his answer, so that that bishopric was long undisposed of; till he saw the issue of all of our treaty, which easily resolved him. Dr. Manton was offered the deanery of Rochester, and Dr. Bates, the deanery of Coventry and Litchfield, which they both after some time refused. And, as I heard, Mr. Edward Bowles was offered the deanery of York, at least, which he refused.”*

The king’s declaration of which some account has already been given, contained the following expression of his intentions concerning the book of common prayer. “Though we do esteem the liturgy of the church of England, contained in the book of common prayer, and by law established, to be the best we have seen, and we believe we have seen all that are extant and used in this part of the world, and well know what reverence most of the reformed churches, or at least the most learned men in those churches have for it; yet since we find some exceptions made to many obsolete words, and other expressions used therein, which upon the reformation and improvement of the English language may well be altered, we will appoint some learned divines, of different persuasions to review the same, and to make such alterations as shall be thought

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 281, 284:

most necessary, and some such additional prayers as shall be thought fit for emergent occasions, and the improvement of devotion, the using of which may be left to the discretion of the ministers." This royal promise was yet to be fulfilled ; and on the fulfilment of this depended the value and efficacy of all the previous negotiations. "Therefore," says Baxter, "being often with the lord chancellor, I humbly entreated him to hasten the finishing of that work, that we might rejoice in our desired concord. At last Dr. Reynolds and Mr. Calamy were authorized to name the persons on that side to manage the treaty ; and a commission was granted under the broad seal to the persons nominated on both sides. I entreated Mr. Calamy and Dr. Reynolds, to leave me out ; for though I much desired the expedition of the work, I found that the last debates had made me unacceptable with my superiors, and this would much more increase it, and other men might be fitter who were much less distasted. But I could not prevail with them to excuse me." Twelve bishops were appointed on one side ; and as many of the leading presbyterian ministers on the other, including Reynolds, Calamy, and Baxter ; with nine assistants on each side, among whom, on the presbyterian side, were men of no less note than William Bates and John Lightfoot.

"A meeting was appointed," says Baxter in his account of this affair, "and the Savoy, the bishop of London's lodgings, named by them for the place." "The commission being read, the archbishop of York, a peaceable man, spake first, and told us that he knew nothing of the business, but perhaps the bishop of London knew more of the king's mind in it, and therefore was fitter to speak in it than he. The bishop of London told us, that it was not they, but we that had seen the seekers of this conference, and that desired alterations in the liturgy ; and therefore they had nothing to say or do, till we brought in all that we had to say against it in writing, and all the additional forms and alterations which we desired. Our brethren were very much against this motion, and urged the king's commission, which required us to meet together, advise, and consult. They told him that by conference we might perceive, as we went, what each would yield to, and might more speedily dispatch, and probably attain, our end ;

whereas, writing would be a tedious, endless business, and we should not have that familiarity and acquaintance with each other's minds, which might facilitate our concord. But the bishop of London resolutely insisted on it not to do any thing till we brought in all our exceptions, alterations, and additions, at once. In this I confess, above all things else, I was wholly of his mind, and prevailed with my brethren to consent; but, I conjecture, upon contrary reasons. For, I suppose, he thought that we should either be altogether by the ears, and be of several minds among ourselves, at least in our new forms; or that when our proposals and forms came to be scanned by them, they should find as much matter of exception against ours as we did against theirs; or that the people of our persuasion would be dissatisfied or divided about it. And indeed our brethren themselves, thought either all, or much of this would come to pass, and our disadvantage would be exceeding great. But I told them the reasons of my opinion: 1. That we should quickly agree on our exceptions, or offer none but what we were agreed on. 2. That we were engaged to offer them new forms, which was the expedient that from the beginning I had aimed at and brought in, as the only way of accommodation, considering that they should be in Scripture words, and that ministers should choose which forms they would. 3. That verbal disputes would be managed with much more contention. 4. But above all, that our cause would never else be well understood by our people, or foreigners, or posterity; but our conference and cause would be misrepresented, and published, as the conference at Hampton Court was, to our prejudice, and none durst contradict it: And that what we said for our cause would in this way come fully and truly to the knowledge of England, and of other nations; and that if we refused this opportunity of leaving upon record our testimony against corruptions, for a just and moderate reformation, we were never like to have the like again. And upon these reasons, I told the bishops that we accepted of the task which they imposed on us; yet so as to bring all our exceptions at one time, and all our additions at another time, which they granted."*

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 305, 306.

This plan having been determined on, the Presbyterian brethren immediately proceeded to their work. The task of drawing up additional and amended forms of prayer they imposed upon Baxter ; but the preparation of exceptions against the liturgy then in use, they undertook in common, and for that work they agreed to meet day by day till it should be finished. In making this arrangement for the division of their labor, they were probably influenced by the expectation that Baxter would do his part better without any coadjutor, and that they would proceed more peaceably and more rapidly without the assistance of his peculiarly keen and disputatious mind. “ Hereupon,” he says, “ I departed from them, and came no more till I had finished my task, which was a fortnight’s time. My leisure was too short for the doing of it with that accurateness which a business of that nature doth require, or for the consulting with men or authors. I could not have time to make use of any book save the Bible and my concordance, comparing all with the Assembly’s Directory, and the book of common prayer, and Hammond L’Estrange. At the fortnight’s end I brought it to the other commissioners.”

The work which was prepared in that fortnight was afterwards published. It is an entire liturgy, drawn up not with the design that it might be published by law in the place of the old book of prayer, but only with the desire that the ministers of the church might be at liberty to use this if they pleased, instead of the other. In reading these devout, scriptural and impressive forms, I cannot but acknowledge that I have felt with how much more effect the cause of prescribed forms of public devotion might have been argued at this day, had the “ Reformed Liturgy ” then been allowed in the established church of England.

When Baxter, having done his part of the work, came back to his brethren, he found them only beginning their exceptions. At his suggestion, they agreed to present to the bishops, with their other papers, a petition for peace, beseeching them to make every concession which they could without doing violence to their own consciences, for the sake of promoting the peace of the church and the conversion and salvation of souls. The result however was, as the Presbyterians had feared, and as the bishops had pre-

determined. Not the least point or particle was yielded by the dominant party for the sake of accommodation.

The time within which the commission was limited, was nearly exhausted in this sort of controversy, when, about ten days before the expiration of their commission, the bishops still insisting that there should be no alteration of the liturgy but in those points in which it should be proved by regular scholastic disputation to be *unlawful*, the Presbyterians reluctantly yielded to their demand for such a disputation. "We were left," says Baxter, "in a very great strait. If we should enter upon dispute with them, we gave up the end and hope of our endeavors. If we refused it, we knew that they would boast that when it came to the setting to, we would not so much as attempt to prove any thing unlawful in the liturgy, nor durst dispute it with them.

"Mr. Calamy, with some others of our brethren, would have had us refuse the motion of disputing as not tending to fulfil the king's commands. We told the bishops, over and over, that they could not choose but know that before we could end one argument in a dispute, our time would be expired; and that it could not possibly tend to any accommodation; and that to keep off from personal conference, till within a few days of the expiration of the commission, and then resolve to do nothing but wrangle out the time in a dispute, as if we were between jest and earnest in the schools, was too visibly in the sight of all the world, to defeat the king's commission, and the expectation of many thousands, who longed for our unity and peace. But we spoke to the deaf; they had other ends, and were other men, and had the art to suit the means unto their ends. For my part, when I saw that they would do nothing else, I persuaded our brethren to yield to a disputation with them, and let them understand that we were far from fearing it, seeing they would give us no hopes of concord: but, withal, first to profess to them, that the guilt of disappointing his majesty and the kingdom, lay not upon us, who desired to obey the king's commission, but on them. And so we yielded to spend the little time remaining, in disputing with them, rather than go home and do nothing, and leave them to tell the court that we durst not dis-

pute with them when they so provoked us, nor were able to prove our accusations of the liturgy.”*

The dispute thus undertaken was managed by three on each side, chosen for the purpose. Baxter took the lead on one side, and Dr. Gunning on the other. Bishop Burnet’s account of the debate is, that these two disputants “spent several days in logical arguing, to the diversion of the town, who looked upon them as a couple of fencers engaged in a dispute that could not be brought to any end. The Bishops insisted on the laws being still in force, to which they would admit of no exception unless it was proved that the matter of them was sinful. They charged the Presbyterians with making a schism for that which they could not prove to be sinful. They said there was no reason to gratify such men; that one demand granted would draw on many more; that all authority in church and state was struck at by the position they had insisted on, namely, That it was not lawful to impose things indifferent; since these seemed to be the only matters in which authority could interfere.”

Thus ended the Savoy conference, the commission by which it was held expiring July 25, 1661. At the end it was agreed to report to the king as the result of their conference, “That we were all agreed on the ends for the churches welfare, unity, and peace, and his majesty’s happiness and contentment, but after all our debates were disagreed of the means.”

“When this work was over,” says Baxter, “the rest of our brethren met again, and resolved to draw up an account of our endeavors and present it to his majesty, with our petition for his promised help yet for those alterations and abatements which we could not procure of the bishops. They also resolved that first we should acquaint the Lord Chancellor with it, and consult with him about it. Which we did; and as soon as we came to him, according to my expectation, I found him most offended at me, and that I had taken off the distaste and blame from all the rest. At our first entrance he merrily told us that if I were but as fat as Dr. Manton, we should all do well. I told him, if his lordship could

* Narrative, Part II. p. 336.

teach me the art of growing fat, he should find me not unwilling to learn by any good means. He grew more serious, and said that I was severe and strict like a melancholy man, and made those things sin which others did not : and I perceived he had been possessed with displeasure towards me upon that account, that I charged the church and liturgy with *sin*, and had not supposed that the worst was but inexpediency. I told him that I had spoken nothing but what I thought and had given my reasons for. After other such discourse, we craved his favor to procure the king's declaration yet to be passed into an act, and his advice what we had further to do. He consented that we should draw up an address to his majesty, rendering him an account of all ; but desired that we would first show it him, which we promised.

“ When we had showed our paper to the lord chancellor, (which the brethren had desired me to draw up, and had consented to without any alteration,) he was not pleased with some passages in it, which he thought too pungent or pressing ; but would not bid us put them out. So we went with it to the lord chamberlain, (the earl of Manchester,) and I read it to him also ; and he was earnest with us to blot out some passages as too vehement, and such as would not well be borne. I was very loth to leave them out, but Sir Gilbert Gerard, an ancient godly man, being with him, and of the same mind, I yielded.” “ But when we came to present it to his majesty, the earl of Manchester secretly told the rest, that if Dr. Reynolds, Dr. Bates, and Dr. Manton would deliver it, it would be the more acceptable, intimating that I was grown unacceptable at court. But they would not go without me, and he professed he desired not my exclusion. When they told me of it, I took my leave of him and was going away ; but he and they came after me to the stairs and importuned me to return, and I went with them to take my farewell of this service.” “ So we desired Dr. Manton to deliver our petition, and with it the fair copies of all our papers to the bishops, which were required of us for the king. And when bishop Reynolds had spoken a few words, Dr. Manton delivered them to the king, who received them and the petition, but did not bid us read it at all. At last, in his speeches, something fell out which Dr. Manton told him that the petition gave a full

account of, if his majesty pleased to give him leave to read it; whereupon he had leave to read it out." "And this was the end of these affairs."*

While this vexatious and fruitless negotiation was going on, Baxter had frequent interviews with the lord chancellor, on business of another nature, of which some account may be given in his own words.

"In the time of Cromwell's government, Mr. John Elliot, with some assistant in New-England, having learned the natives' language, and converted many souls among them, it was found that the great hindrance of the progress of that work, was the poverty and barbarousness of the people which made many to live dispersed like wild beasts in wildernesses, so that having neither towns, nor food, nor entertainment fit for English bodies, few of them could be got together to be spoken to, nor could the English go far or stay long among them. Wherefore to build them houses, and draw them together, and maintain the preachers that went among them, and pay school masters to teach their children, and keep their children at school, etc., Cromwell caused a collection to be made in England in every parish; and people did contribute very largely. And with the money, beside some left in stock, was bought seven or eight hundred pounds *per annum* of lands; and a corporation was chosen to dispose of the rents for the furthering of the works among the Indians. This land was almost all bought for the worth of it of one Colonel Beddingfield, a papist, an officer in the king's army. When the king came in, Beddingfield seizeth on the lands again and keepeth them, and refuseth either to surrender them or to repay the money; because all that was done in Cromwell's time being now judged void, as done without law, that corporation was now null, and so could have no right to money or lands; and he pretended that he sold it under the worth, in expectation of the recovery of it upon the king's return. The president of the corporation was the Lord Steele, a judge, a worthy man; the treasurer was Mr. Henry Ashurst, and the members were such sober godly men as were best affected to New-England's work. Mr. Ashurst being the most

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 364, 365.

exemplary person for eminent sobriety, self-denial, piety, and charity, that London could boast of, as far as public observation, and fame, and his most intimate friends' reports could testify, did make this, and all other public good which he could do, his business. He called the old corporation together and desired me to meet them, where we all agreed that such as had incurred the king's displeasure by being members of any courts of justice in Cromwell's days, should quietly recede, and we should try if we could get the corporation restored, and the rest continued and more fit men added, that the land might be recovered. And because, in our other business, I had ready access to the lord chancellor, they desired me to solicit him about it. So Mr. Ashurst and I did follow the business. The lord chancellor at the very first was ready to further us, approving of the work, as that which could not be for any faction or evil end, but honorable to the king and land. He told me that Beddingfield could have no right to that which he had sold, and that the right was in the king who would readily grant it to the good use intended ; and that we should have his best assistance to recover it. And indeed I found him real to us in this business from first to last ; yet did Beddingfield by the friendship of the attorney general and some others, so delay the business, as bringing it to a suit in chancery, he kept Mr. Ashurst in a twelve-month's trouble before he could recover the lands, but when it came to judgment, the lord chancellor spake very much against him, and granted a decree for the new corporation. For I had procured of him before, the king's grant of a new corporation ; and Mr. Ashurst and myself had the naming of the members. We desired Mr. Robert Boyle, a worthy person of learning and a public spirit, and brother to the earl of Cork, to be president ; and I got Mr. Ashurst to be treasurer again ; and some of the old members, and many other godly able citizens made up the rest. Only we left the nomination of some lords to his majesty, as not presuming to nominate such ; and the lord chancellor, lord chamberlain, and six or seven more, were added. But it was Mr. Boyle and Mr. Ashurst, with the citizens, that did the work ; but especially the care and trouble of all was on Mr. Ashurst. And thus that business was happily restored.

“As a fruit of this his majesty’s favor, Mr. Elliot sent the king, first the New Testament, and then the whole Bible, translated and printed in the Indians’ language;—such a work and fruit of a plantation as was never before presented to a king. And he sent word that next he would print my ‘Call to the unconverted,’ and then ‘The Practice of Piety.’ But Mr. Boyle sent him word that it would be better taken here, if ‘The Practice of Piety’ were printed before any thing of mine. At the present, the revenue of the land goeth most to the maintaining of the press. Upon the occasion of this work, I had letters of thanks from the Court and Governor in New-England, and from Mr. Norton and Mr. Elliot.”*

These letters are given at length in Baxter’s narrative; but they are more important in connection with the history of New-England than as a part of his personal history. The first is dated “Boston in New-England, this 7th of August 1661,” and is signed “Jo. Endecott, Governor; with the consent and by order of the General Court.” It was written on the presumption that “one of his majesty’s chaplains in ordinary,” who had been instrumental in reorganizing the corporation for the benefit of the Indians, must have some influence at court; and while it beautifully expresses the thanks of the Massachusetts colony for what he had already done, it solicits his continual good offices in their behalf. “What advantage,” say they, “God hath put into your hands, and reserved your weak body unto, by access unto persons of honor and trust, or otherwise, we hope it will be no grief of heart unto you, if you shall improve part thereof this way. All that we desire, is liberty to serve God according to the Scriptures. Liberty unto error and sin, or to set up another rule besides the Scriptures, we neither wish to be allowed to ourselves nor would we allow it to others. If in any thing we should mistake the meaning of the Scriptures,” “we are willing and desirous to live and learn by any orderly means that God hath appointed for our learning and instruction; and glad shall we be of the opportunity to learn in peace. The liberty aforesaid we have, by the favor of God, now for many years enjoyed, and the same advantaged and enconraged by the

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 29, 291.

constitution of our civil government, according to concessions and privileges granted and established to us by the gracious letters-patent of king Charles the first, the continuance of which privileges is our earnest and just desire, for nothing that is unjust, or not honest both in the sight of the Lord and also of men, do we seek, or would allow ourselves in. We hope we shall continue as faithful subjects to his majesty (according to our duty,) under an elective government, as under an imposed." Our hope is in God who hath hitherto helped us, and who is able to keep open for us a great and effectual door of liberty to serve him, and opportunity to advance his name in this wilderness, although there be many adversaries."

The second of these letters, is from the pen of the celebrated John Norton of the first church in Boston, and bears date "Sept. 23, 1661." It was written "in behalf of one Mr. William Leet, Governor of New Haven jurisdiction, whose caso," says the writer, "is this. He being conscious of indiscretion and some neglect, (not to say how it came about) in relation to the expediting the execution of the warrant, according to his duty, sent from his majesty for the apprehending of the two Colonels,* is not without fear of some displeasure that may follow thereupon; and indeed hath almost ever since been a man depressed in his spirit for the neglect wherewith he chargeth himself therein. His endeavors also since have been accordingly, and that in full degree; as, besides his own testimony, his neighbors attest they see not what he could have done more. Sir, if any report prejudicial to this gentleman in this respect, come unto your ear by your prudent enquiry upon this intimation, or otherwise; so far as the signification of the premises unto his majesty or other eminent person, may plead for him or avert trouble towards him, I assure myself you may report it as a real truth; and that, according to your wisdom, you would be helpful to him so far therein, is both his and my desire. The gentleman hath pursued both others and myself with letters to this effect, and yet not satisfied therewith, came to Boston to disburthen his

* It is hardly necessary to say that these "two colonels," are the regicide Judges, Whalley and Goffe.

heart to me ;” “ upon issue of which conference no better expedient, under God, presented itself to us than this.”

The letter from Elliot, abovementioned, is a valuable and beautiful memorial of the venerated apostle of the Indians; but it was written at a late date, and the insertion of any extracts here would too much interrupt our narrative.

The Savoy conference was closed, July 25th, 1661. The last interview of Baxter and his brethren with the king, when they presented their last and hopeless petition, must have been soon after. In bringing down to this time the story of these public transactions, many incidents of a more private and personal nature have been omitted. Some of these will now be recited in his own language.

“ When I had refused a bishopric, I did it on such reasons as offended not the lord chancellor ; and, therefore, instead of it, I presumed to crave his favor to restore me to preach to my people at Kidderminster again, from whence I had been cast out, when many hundreds of others were ejected, upon the restoration of all them that had been sequestered. It was but a vicarage, and the vicar was a poor, unlearned, ignorant, silly reader, who little understood what Christianity, and the articles of his creed, did signify ; but once a quarter he said something which he called a sermon, which made him the pity or laughter of the people. This man, being unable to preach himself, kept always a curate under him to preach. My people were so dear to me, and I to them, that I would have been with them upon the lowest lawful terms. Some laughed at me for refusing a bishopric, and petitioning to be a reading vicar’s curate ; but I had little hopes of so good a condition, at least for any considerable time.

“ The ruler of the vicar and all the business there, was Sir Ralph Clare ; an old man, and an old courtier, who carried it towards me, all the time I was there, with great civility and respect, and sent me a purse of money when I went away, but I refused it. But his zeal against all who scrupled ceremonies, or who would not preach for prelacy and conformity, was so much greater than his respects to me, that he was the principal cause of my removal, though he has not owned it to this day. I suppose he thought that when I was far enough off, he could so far rule the town, as to re-

duce the people to his way. But he little knew, nor others of that temper, how firm conscientious men are to the matters of their everlasting interest, and how little men's authority can do against the authority of God, with those that are unfeignedly subject to him. Openly, he seemed to be for my return at first, that he might not offend the people; and the lord chancellor seemed very forward in it, and all the difficulty was, how to provide some other place for the old vicar, Mr. Dance, that he might be no loser by the change. And it was so contrived, that all must seem forward in it except the vicar. The king himself must be engaged in it; the lord chancellor earnestly presseth it; Sir Ralph Clare is willing and very desirous of it; and the vicar is willing, if he may but be recompensed with as good a place. Either all desire it, or none desire it. But the hindrance was, that among all the livings and prebendaries of England, there was none fit for the poor vicar. A prebend he must not have, because he was insufficient, and yet he is still thought sufficient to be the pastor of near 4,000 souls! The lord chancellor, to make the business certain, will engage himself for a valuable stipend to the vicar, and his own steward must be commanded to pay it him. What could be desired more? But the poor vicar was to answer him that this was no security to him; his lordship might withhold that stipend at his pleasure, and then where was his maintenance? Give him but a legal title to any thing of equal value, and he would resign. And the patron was my sure and intimate friend. But no such thing was to be had, and so Mr. Dance must keep his place.

“ Though I requested not any preferment of them but this, yet even for this I resolved I would never be importunate. I only nominated it as the favor which I desired, when their offers in general invited me to ask more; and then I told them, that if it were in any way inconvenient to them, I would not request it of them. And at the very first I desired, that if they thought it best for the vicar to keep his place, I was willing to take the lecture, which, by his bond, was secured to me, and was still my right; or if that were denied me, I would be his curate while the king's declaration stood in force. But none of these could be accepted with men that were so exceeding willing. In the end, it appeared that two knights of

the county, Sir Ralph Clare and Sir John Packington, who were very great with Dr. Morley, newly-made bishop of Worcester, had made him believe that my interest was so great, and I could do so much with ministers and people in that county, that unless I would bind myself to promote their cause and party, I was not fit to be there. And this bishop, being greatest of any man with the lord chancellor, must obstruct my return to my ancient flock. At last, Sir Ralph Clare did freely tell me, that if I would conform to the orders and ceremonies of the church, and preach conformity to the people, and labor to set them right, there was no man in England so fit to be there, for no man could more effectually do it; but if I would not, there was no man so unfit for the place, for no man could more hinder it.

“I desired it as the greatest favor of them, that if they intended not my being there they would plainly tell me so, that I might trouble them and myself no more about it; but that was a favor too great to be expected. I had continual encouragement by promises till I was almost tired in waiting on them. At last, meeting Sir Ralph Clare in the bishop’s chamber, I desired him, before the bishop, to tell me to my face, if he had any thing against me which might cause all this ado. He told me that I would give the sacrament to none kneeling, and that of eighteen hundred communicants, there were not past six hundred that were for me, and the rest were rather for the vicar. I answered, I was very glad that these words fell out to be spoken in the bishop’s hearing. To the first accusation, I told him, that he himself knew I invited him to the sacrament, and offered it him kneeling, and under my hand in writing; and openly in his hearing in the pulpit, I had promised and told both him and all the rest, I never had nor ever would put any man from the sacrament on the account of kneeling, but leave every one to the posture which they should choose; and that the reason why I never gave it to any kneeling, was because all that came would sit or stand, and those that were for kneeling only followed him, who would not come unless I would administer it to him and his party on a day by themselves, when the rest were not present; and I had no mind to be the author of such a schism, and make, as it were, two churches of one. But

especially the consciousness of notorious scandal, which they knew they must be accountable for, did make many kneelers stay away ; and all this he could not deny.

“ As to the second charge, I statcd, there was a witness ready to say as he did ; for the truth is, among good and bad, I knew but one man in the town against me, which was a stranger newly come, one Ganderton, an attorney, steward to the Lord of Abergavenny, a Papist, who was lord of the manor, and this one man was the prosecutor, and witnessed how many were against my return. I craved of the bishop that I might send by the next post to know their minds, and if that were so I would take it for a favor to be kept from thence. When the people heard this at Kidderminster, in a day’s time they gathered the hands of sixteen hundred of the eighteen hundred communicants, and the rest were such as were from home. And within four or five days, I happened to find Sir Ralph Clare with the bishop again, and showed him the hands of sixteen hundred communicants, with an offer of more if they might have time, all very earnest for my return. Sir Ralph was silenced as to that point ; but he and the bishop appeared so much the more against my return.

“ The letter which the lord chancellor upon his own offer wrote for me to Sir Ralph Clare, he gave at my request unsealed ; and so I took a copy of it before I sent it away, as thinking the chief use would be to keep it and compare it with their dealings. It was as followeth :

“ ‘ Sir,

“ ‘ I am a little out of countenance, that after the discovery of such a desire in his majesty, that Mr. Baxter should be settled at Kidderminster, as he was heretofore, and my promise to you by the king’s direction, that Mr. Dance should very punctually receive a recompense by way of a rent upon his or your bills charged here upon my steward, Mr. Baxter hath yet no fruit of this his majesty’s good intention towards him ; so that he hath too much reason to believe that he is not so frankly dealt with in this particular as he deserves to be. I do again tell you, that it will be very acceptable to the king if you can persuade Mr. Dance to surrender that charge to Mr. Baxter ; and in the mean time, and till he is preferred to

as profitable an employment, whatever agreement you shall make with him for an annual rent, it shall be paid quarterly upon a bill from you charged upon my steward, Mr. Clutterbucke; and for the exact performance of this, you may securely pawn your full credit. I do most earnestly entreat you, that you will with all speed inform me what we may depend upon in this particular, that we may not keep Mr. Baxter in suspense, who hath deserved very well from his majesty, and of whom his majesty hath a very good opinion; and I hope you will not be the less desirous to comply with him for the particular recommendation of,

“ ‘ Sir, Your very affectionate servant,

“ ‘ Edw. Hyde.”

“ Can any thing be more serious, cordial, and obliging, than all this? For a lord chancellor that hath the business of the kingdom upon his hand, and lords attending him, to take up his time so much and often about so low a person and so small a thing! And why should not a man be content without a vicarage or a curateship, when it is not in the power of the king and the lord chancellor to procure it for him, though they so vehemently desire it? But, O! thought I, how much better a life do poor men live, who speak as they think, and do as they profess, and are never put upon such shifts as these for their present conveniences! Wonderful! thought I, that men who do so much overvalue worldly honor and esteem, can possibly so much forget futurity, and think only of the present day, as if they regarded not how their actions be judged of by posterity. Notwithstanding all his extraordinary favor, since the day the king came in, I never received, as his chaplain, or as a preacher, or on any account, the value of one farthing of any public maintenance. So that I, and many a hundred more, had not had a piece of bread but for the voluntary contribution, whilst we preached, of another sort of people: yea, while I had all this excess of favor, I would have taken it indeed for an excess, as being far beyond my expectations, if they would but have given me liberty to preach the Gospel, without any maintenance, and leave me to beg my bread.”

“ A little after this, Sir Ralph Clare and others caused the houses of the people of the town of Kidderminster to be searched for

arms, and if any had a sword it was taken from them. And meeting him after with the bishop, I desired him to tell us why his neighbors were so used, as if he would have made the world believe they were seditious, or rebels, or dangerous persons, that should be used as enemies to the king. He answered me, that it was because they would not bring out their arms when they were commanded, but said they had none; whereas they had arms on every occasion to appear with on the behalf of Cromwell. This great disingenuity of so ancient a gentleman towards his neighbors, whom he pretended kindness to, made me break forth into some more than ordinary freedom of reproof; so that I answered him, we had thought our condition hard, that by strangers, who knew us not, we should be ordinarily traduced and misrepresented: but this was most sad and marvellous, that a gentleman so civil, should, before the bishop, speak such words against a corporation, which he knew I was able to confute, and were so contrary to truth. I asked him whether he did not know that I publicly and privately spake against the usurpers, and declared them to be rebels; and whether he took not the people to be of my mind; and whether I and they had not hazarded our liberty by refusing the engagement against the king and House of Lords, when he and others of his mind had taken it. He confessed that I had been against Cromwell; but they had always, on every occasion, appeared in arms for him. I told him that he struck me with admiration, that it should be possible for him to live in the town, and yet believe what he said to be true, or yet to speak it in our hearing if he knew it to be untrue. And I professed that having lived there sixteen years since the wars, I never knew that they once appeared in arms for Cromwell, or any usurpers; and challenged him, upon his word, to name one time. I could not get him to name any time, till I had urged him to the utmost; and then he instanced in the time when the Scots army fled from Worcester. I challenged him to name one man of them that was at Worcester fight, or bare arms there, or at any time for the usurpers: and when he could name none, I told him that all that was done to my knowledge in sixteen years, of that kind was but this, that when the Scots fled from Worcester, as all the country sought in covetousness to catch some of them for

the sake of their horses, so two idle rogues of Kidderminster, that never communicated with me any more than he did, had drawn two or three neighbors with them in the night, as the Scots fled, to catch their horses. And I never heard of three that they caught; and I appealed to the bishop and his conscience, whether he—that being urged, could name no more but this—did ingenuously accuse the corporation, magistrates, and people, to have appeared on all occasions in arms for Cromwell? And when they had no more to say, I told them by this we saw what measures to expect from strangers of his mind, when he that is our neighbor, and noted for eminent civility, never sticketh to speak such things even of a people among whom he hath still lived.

“At the same time, about twenty or two-and-twenty furious fanatics, called fifth-monarchy men, one Venner, a wine-cooper, and his church that he preached unto, being transported with enthusiastic pride, did rise up in arms, and fought in the streets like madmen, against all that stood in their way, till there were some killed and the rest taken, judged, and executed. I wrote a letter at this time to my mother-in-law, containing nothing but our usual matter, even encouragements to her in her age and weakness, fetched from the nearness of her rest, together with the report of this news, and some sharp and vehement words against the rebels. By means of Sir John Packington, or his soldiers, the post was searched, and my letter intercepted, opened and revised, and by Sir John sent up to London to the bishop, and the lord chancellor. It was a wonder, that having read it, they were not ashamed to send it up; but joyful would they have been, could they have found a word in it which could possibly have been distorted to an evil sense, that malice might have had its prey. I went to the lord chancellor and complained of this usage, and that I had not the common liberty of a subject to converse by letters with my own family. He disowned it, and blamed men’s rashness, but excused it from the distempers of the times; yet he and the bishops confessed they had seen the letter, and that there was nothing in it but what was good and pious. Two days after, came the lord Windsor, lord lieutenant of the county, and governor of Jamaica, with Sir Charles Littleton, the king’s cup-bearer, to bring me my letter again to my lodgings,

and lord Windsor told me the lord chancellor appointed him to do it. And after some expression of my sense of the abuse, I thanked him for his great civility and favor. But I saw how far that sort of men were to be trusted.”*

While these things were done, Baxter preached in various churches of the metropolis as he had opportunity. About one year after his leaving Kidderminster, he accepted a lectureship at St. Dunstan’s church in Fleet-street, where Dr. Bates was pastor, and preached there statedly in the afternoon of every Lord’s day, receiving some small compensation from the people. “Seeing which way things were going, he, for his better security, applied to Bishop Sheldon, for his license to preach in his diocese. Some were offended at his taking this step; but he went to him as the king’s officer. The bishop received him with abundance of respect, but offered him the book to subscribe in. He pleaded the king’s declaration as exempting from a necessity of subscribing. The bishop bid him therefore write what he would. Whereupon, he subscribed a promise in Latin, not to preach against the doctrine of the church or the ceremonies in *his* diocese as long as he used *his* license. Upon which he freely gave him his license, and would let his secretary take no money of him. And yet he could scarce preach a sermon but he was informed from some quarter or other, that he preached sedition, and reflected on the government.”† He says himself, “I scarce think that I ever preached a sermon without a spy to give them his report of it.” Sometimes he preached explicitly “against faction, schism, sedition and rebellion, and those sermons also,” he says, “were reported to be factious and seditious.” Several discourses against which such charges were preferred, he felt himself constrained to publish in self-defence. The book thus produced is entitled “The Vain Religion of the formal hypocrite.”

Speaking of his ministry at St. Dunstan’s, he says, “The congregation being crowded, was that which provoked envy to accuse me: and one day the crowd did drive me from my place. It fell

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 300, 301. † Calamy’s Abridgement, pp. 576, 577.

out that at Dunstan's church, in the midst of sermon, a little lime and dust, and perhaps a piece of a brick or two, fell down in the steeple or belfrey near the boys ; which put the whole congregation into sudden melancholy, so that they thought the steeple and church were falling ; which put them all into so confused a haste to get away, that indeed the noise of their feet in the galleries sounded like the falling of the stones. The people crowded out of doors : the women left some of them a scarf, and some a shoe behind them, and some in the galleries cast themselves down upon those below, because they could not get down the stairs. I sat still down in the pulpit, seeing and pitying their vain distemper, and as soon as I could be heard, I entreated their silence, and went on. The people were no sooner quieted and got in again, and the auditory composed, but some that stood upon a wainscot-bench, near the communion table, brake the bench with their weight, so that the noise renewed the fear again, and they were worse disordered than before. One old woman was heard at the church door asking forgiveness of God for not taking the first warning, and promising, if God would deliver her this once, she would take heed of coming hither again. When they were again quieted, I went on ; but the church having before an ill name as very old, rotten, and dangerous, this put the parish upon a resolution to pull down all the roof, and build it better, which they have done with so great reparation of the walls and steeple, that it is now like a new church and much more commodious for the hearers."*

Dr. Bates, in his sermon on occasion of Baxter's funeral, describes this incident, as "an instance of his firm faith in the divine providence, and his fortitude." "Mr. Baxter, without visible disturbance, sat down in the pulpit. After the hurry was over, he resumed his discourse, and said, to compose their minds, 'We are in the service of God to prepare ourselves, that we may be fearless at the great noise of the dissolving world, when the heavens shall pass away, and the elements melt in fervent heat ; the earth also and the works therein shall be burned up.' "†

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 301, 302.

† Bates' Works, Vol. IV. p. 329

“Upon this reparation of Dunstan’s church, I preached out my quarter at Bride’s church, in the other end of Fleet Street; where the common prayer being used by the curate before sermon, I occasioned abundance to be at common prayer, who before avoided it: and yet my accusations still continued. On the week days, Mr. Ashurst, with about twenty more citizens, desired me to preach a lecture in Milk Street; for which they allowed me forty pounds per annum, which I continued near a year, till we were all silenced. At the same time I preached once every Lord’s day at Blackfriars, where Mr. Gibbons, a judicious man, was minister. In Milk Street, I took money, because it came not from the parishioners, but from strangers, and so was no wrong to the minister, Mr. Vincent, a very holy, blameless man. But at Blackfriars I never took a penny, because it was the parishioners who called me, who would else be less able and ready to help their worthy pastor, who went to God by a consumption, a little after he was silenced and put out. At these two churches I ended the course of my public ministry, unless God cause an undeserved resurrection.”*

“Shortly after our disputation at the Savoy, I went to Rickmersworth, in Hertfordshire, and preached there but once, from Matt. xxii. 12, ‘And he was speechless.’ I spake not a word that was any nearer kin to sedition, or that had any greater tendency to provoke them, than by showing that wicked men, and the refusers of grace, however they may have now many things to say to excuse their sin, will, at last, be speechless, and dare not stand to their wickedness before God. Yet did the bishop of Worcester tell me, when he silenced me, that the bishop of London had showed him letters from one of the hearers, assuring him, that I preached seditiously. So little security was any man’s innocence, who displeased the bishops, to his reputation with that party, if he had but one auditor that desired to get favor by accusing him.

“Soon after my return to London, I went into Worcestershire, to try whether it were possible to have any honest terms from the reading vicar there, that I might preach to my former flock; but

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 301, 302.

when I had preached twice or thrice, he denied me liberty to preach any more. I offered to take my lecture, which he was bound to allow me, under a bond of £500; but he refused it. I next offered to be his curate, and he refused it. I next offered to preach for nothing, and he refused it: and, lastly, I desired leave but once to administer the sacrament to the people, and preach my farewell sermon to them; but he would not consent. At last, I understood that he was directed by his superiors to do what he did: but Mr. Baldwin, an able preacher, whom I left there, was yet permitted.

“At that time, my aged father lying in great pain of the stone and stranguary, I went to visit him, twenty miles further: and while I was there, Mr. Baldwin came to me, and told me that he also was forbidden to preach. We returned both to Kidderminster, and having a lecture at Sheffnal in the way, I preached there, and staid not to hear the evening sermon, because I would make haste to the bishop. It fell out that my turn at another lecture was on the same day with that at Sheffnal, viz., at Cleobury, in Shropshire; and many were met in expectation to hear me. But a company of soldiers were there, as the country thought, to have apprehended me; who shut the doors against the minister that would have preached in my stead, bringing a command to the churchwarden to hinder any one that had not a license from the bishop; so that the poor people who had come from far, were fain to go home with grieved hearts.

“The next day it was confidently reported, that a certain knight offered the bishop his troop to apprehend me, if I offered to preach: and the people dissuaded me from going to the bishop, supposing my liberty in danger. I went that morning, with Mr. Baldwin, and in the hearing of him and Dr. Warmestry, then dean of Worcester, I reminded the bishop of his promise to grant me his license, &c., but he refused me liberty to preach in his diocese; though I offered to preach only on the Creed, the Lord’s prayer, and the Ten Commandments, catechistical principles, and only to such as had no preaching.”

“Bishop Morley told me when he silenced me, that he would take care that my people should be no losers, but should be taught as well as they were by me. When I was gone, he got awhile a

few scandalous men, with some that were more civil, to keep up the lecture, till the paucity of their auditors gave them a pretense to put it down. He came himself one day and preached to them a long invective against them and me as Presbyterians, and I know not what ; so that the people wondered that ever a man would venture to come up into a pulpit and speak so confidently to a people that he knew not, the things which they commonly knew to be untrue. And this sermon was so far from winning any of them to the estimation of their new bishop, or curing that which he called the admiration of my person, (which was his great endeavor,) that they were much confirmed in their former judgments. But still the bishop looked at Kidderminster as a factious, schismatical, Presbyterian people, that must be cured of their overvaluing of me, and then they would be cured of all the rest. Whereas if he had lived with them the twentieth part so long as I had done, he would have known that they were neither Presbyterians, nor factious, nor schismatical, nor seditious ; but a people that quietly followed their hard labor, and learned the holy Scriptures, and lived a holy, blameless life, in humility and peace with all men, and never had any sect or separated party among them, but abhorred all faction and sidings in religion, and lived in love and Christian unity.

“ Yet when the bishop was gone, the dean came and preached about three hours to cure them of the admiration of my person ; and a month after came again and preached over the same, persuading the people that they were Presbyterians, and schismatical, and were led to it by their overvaluing of me. The people admired at the temerity of these men, and really thought that they were scarce well in their wits, who would go on to speak things so far from truth, of men whom they never knew, and that to their own faces.” “ This dealing, instead of winning them to the preacher, drove them from the lecture, and then, as I said, they accused the people of deserting it, and put it down.

“ For this ordinary preacher, they set up one, of the best parts they could get, far from what his patrons spake him to be, who was quickly weary and went away. And next they set up a poor dry man, that had been a schoolmaster near us, and after a little time he died. And since they have taken another course, and set up a

young man, the best they can get, who taketh the contrary way to the first, and over applaudeth me in the pulpit, and speaketh well of them, and useth them kindly. And they are glad of one that hath some charity. And thus the bishop hath used that flock, who say that till then they never knew so well what a bishop was, nor were before so guilty of that dislike of Episcopacy of which they were so frequently and vehemently accused. I hear not of one person among them, who is won to the love of prelacy or formality since my removal.

“ Having parted with my dear flock, I need not say with mutual sense and tears, I left Mr. Baldwin to live privately among them and oversee them in my stead, and visit them from house to house ; advising them, notwithstanding all the injuries they had received, and all the failings of the ministers that preached to them, and the defects of the present way of worship, that they should keep to the public assemblies and make use of such helps as might be had in public, together with their private helps. Only in three cases they ought to absent themselves. 1. When the minister was one that was utterly insufficient, as not being able to teach them the articles of the faith and essentials of true religion ; such as, alas ! they had known to their sorrow. 2. When the minister preached any heresy, or doctrine which was directly contrary to any article of the faith, or necessary part of godliness. 3. When in the application he set himself against the ends of his office, to make a holy life seem odious, to keep men from it, and to promote the interest of Satan. Yet not to take every bitter reflection upon themselves or others, occasioned by difference of opinion or interest, to be a sufficient cause to say that the minister preacheth against godliness, or to withdraw themselves.”*

Soon after this, Baxter's ministry in the church of England was terminated by the celebrated “ act of uniformity.” The greatest diligence had been employed by the court party to secure a parliament suited to their purposes. Sham plots, and flying rumors of conspiracies were got up, to throw the nation into a panic and to prepare the public mind for the most violent proceedings against

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 374, 376.

those whom the lord chancellor in the house of commons denounced and vilified as "seditious preachers." Of some of this management, we find in Baxter's Narrative the following naked statement.

"In November (1661) many worthy ministers and others were imprisoned in many counties; and among others, divers of my old neighbors in Worcestershire. And that you may see what crimes were the occasion, I will tell you the story of it. One Mr. Ambrose Sparry, a sober, learned minister that had never owned the parliament's cause or wars, and was in his judgment for moderate episcopacy, had a wicked neighbor whom he reproved for adultery, who bearing him a grudge, thought he had found a time to show it. He, or his confederates for him, framed a letter as from, I know not whom, directed to Mr. Sparry, 'That he and Captain Yarrington should be ready with money and arms at the time appointed, and that they should acquaint Mr. Oasland and Mr. Baxter with it.' This letter he pretended that a man left behind him under a hedge, who sat down and pulled out many letters, and put them all up again save this and went his ways—he knew not what he was or whither he went. This letter he bringeth to Sir John Packington, the man that hotly followed such work, who sent Mr. Sparry, Mr. Oasland and Captain Yarrington to prison." "Who that Mr. Baxter was that the letter named, they could not resolve, there being another of the name nearer, and I being in London. But the men, especially Mr. Sparry, lay long in prison; and when the forgery and injury was detected, he had much ado to get out. Mr. Henry Jackson also, our physician at Kidderminster, and many of my neighbors, were imprisoned, and were never told for what to this day." "Though no one accused me of any thing, nor spake a word to me of it (seeing they knew I had long been near a hundred miles off,) yet did they defame me all over the land, as guilty of a plot; and when men were taken up and sent to prison in other counties, it was said to be for 'Baxter's plot;'—so easy was it, and so necessary a thing it seemed then, to cast such filth upon my name."*

* Narrative, Part II p. 383. The following statement, differing in some particulars from that given above, is from a note in Calamy's Abridge-

These sham plots having had the desired effect; and the Convocation having revised the prayer book, and having made it more

ment, Chap. viii. pp. 177, 180. "Captain Yarrington (a man of an established reputation) did in 1681 publish a full discovery of the first Presbyterian sham plot. In which discovery he declares he related nothing but what he could prove by letters, and many living witnesses; and his account was never publicly contradicted. He says, that many, both of the clergy and laity, disliking the king's declaration concerning ecclesiastical affairs, resolved to run things to the utmost height: And that some of the leading churchmen were heard to say, They would have an act so framed as would reach every Puritan in the kingdom: And that if they thought any of them would so stretch their consciences, as to be comprehended by it, they would insert yet other conditions and subscriptions, so as that they should have no benefit by it. To pave the way for it, they contrive a Presbyterian plot, which was laid in about thirty-six several counties. As to Worcestershire, he gives a like account with Mr. Baxter, only with the addition of many particulars. He says, several letters were drawn up and delivered by Sir John P—— to one Rich. N—— his neighbor. to convey them to one Cole of Martley, who with one Churn, brings them again to Sir John P—— from whom they came, making affidavit, That he found the packet left by a Scotch pedlar under a hedge. In this packet, when it was opened, there were found several letters, discovering a conspiracy to raise a rebellion. There were several letters to the captain; one from Mr. Baxter of Kidderminster, intimating, that he had provided a considerable body of men well armed, which should be ready against the time appointed. And another from Mr. Sparry, intimating, He had ordered him 500*l.* lodged in a friend's hand, &c. Upon this, the militia of the county was raised immediately, and the city of Worcester filled with them the very night after the packet was opened. The next morning the captain was seized by a troop of horse, and brought prisoner to Worcester; and so also were Mr. Sparry, Mr. Oasland, Mr. Moor, and Mr. Brian, ministers, together with some scores of others. They were all kept close prisoners for ten days; by which time the trained bands being weary, most of them were discharged paying their fees. But the captain, Mr. Sparry and the two Oaslands, were still kept close prisoners in the George Inn, the dignitaries of the cathedral taking care, when the trained bands retired, to raise sixty foot soldiers (who had double pay, and were called the clergy band) to secure these criminals. And besides the sentinels upon each of the prisoners, they had a court of guard at the town hall of Worcester." "At length Mrs. Yarrington discovering the sham intrigue, by the acknowledgment which the person employed by Sir J. P. to carry

grievous to men of puritan principles than before, by the addition of more festivals to the Calendar and more lessons out of the apoc-

the packet to Cole of Martley, made to his brother, she gives notice of it to her husband in his confinement, who immediately enters actions against those that imprisoned him. Being at last discharged, he comes up to London, and prevailed with the lord of Bristol to acquaint the king, how his ministers imposed upon him by such sham plots, &c. Upon this the deputy-lieutenants were ordered to appear at the council board. They endeavored to clear themselves, and desired to consult those in the country. But afterwards Sir J. W. (who was one of them) arrests the captain for high treason. He was again released upon the earl of Bristol's procuring the king's privy seal: And going down into the country he prosecutes his prosecutors. But within six months, persons were suborned to swear against him, That he had spoken treasonable words against the king and government. For this he was tried at the assizes at Worcester before Judge Twisden, and upon a full hearing was presently acquitted by the Jury. And one of the witnesses (whom he names) afterwards confessed he had 5*l.* given him for being an evidence.

“ This feigned plot was on foot in Oxfordshire at the same time.” “ There was something of a like sham plot in Leicestershire and Yorkshire. See Conformists 4th Plea for the Nonconf. pp. 30, 40. The great design aimed at by these methods, was to possess the parliament, that it was absolutely necessary to make a severe act against such a restless sort of men, who not contented with the king's pardon, were always plotting to disturb the government. And they reached their end. These plots and stirs in several counties of the land, were in October and November 1661. And on the 20th of November the king appearing in the house after an adjournment, made a speech wherein are these words.—‘ I am sorry to find that the general temper and affections of the nation are not so well composed as I hoped they would have been, after so signal blessings of God Almighty upon us all, and after so great indulgence and condescensions from me towards all interests; there are many wicked instruments still as active as ever, who labor night and day to disturb the public peace, and to make people jealous of each other: It may be worthy your care and vigilance to provide proper remedies for diseases of that kind: And if you find new diseases, you must find new remedies, &c.’ When the house of commons after this speech came to their debates, up stands J. P. one of the knights for Worcestershire, and with open mouth informs them of a dangerous Presbyterian plot on foot; and that many of the chief conspirators were now in prison at Worcester. The like information was given by some members who served for Oxfordshire, Herefordshire, Stafford-

rypha; the bill for an act of uniformity was introduced into the house of commons, where after several debates it passed by a majority of only six votes. The lords, after proposing several amendments which were the subject of a conference between the two houses, at last on the 8th of May 1662 concurred with the commons; and ten days afterwards the bill received the royal assent, and became one of the laws of the land.

The terms of uniformity now imposed on all the ministers were :

1. Such as had not been ordained by a bishop must be reordained.
2. They must all declare their "unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing prescribed and contained in the book of common prayer."
3. They must swear obedience to their bishops and other ecclesiastical superiors.
4. They must most solemnly abjure and condemn the solemn league and covenant, as an oath unlawful in itself and unlawfully imposed.
5. They must profess in its broadest extent the doctrine of passive obedience, declaring the unlawfulness of taking arms against the king or those commissioned by him, upon any pretence whatever.

"When the Act of Uniformity was passed," says Baxter, "it gave no longer time than till Bartholomew's day, August 24, 1662, and then they must be all cast out. This fatal day called to remembrance the French massacre, when on the same day thirty or forty thousand Protestants perished by Roman religious zeal and charity. I had no place of my own; but I preached twice a week, by request, in other men's congregations, at Milk Street and Blackfriars. The last sermon that I preached in public was on May 25. The reasons why I gave over sooner than most others were, because lawyers did interpret a doubtful clause in the act, as ending the liberty of lecturers at that time; because I would let authority soon know that I intended to obey in all that

shire, and other places. Nay this was the general cry; this all the pamphlets printed at that time ran upon. And it was in this very sessions that this bill of uniformity passed the house. And that the general cry occasioned by these sham plots much promoted it, will easily be judged by any one, that will but be at the pains to peruse Yarrington's Narrative, to which the reader is referred for satisfaction."

was lawful; because I would let all ministers in England understand in time, whether I intended to conform or not: for, had I staid to the last day, some would have conformed the sooner, from a supposition that I intended it. These, with other reasons, moved me to cease three months before Bartholomew's day, which many censured for awhile, but, afterwards, better saw the reasons of it."*

By this measure about two thousand ministers, most of them well qualified for their office and devoted and successful in their work, were at once cast out of their places and forbidden to preach the gospel. When the popish clergy were ejected at the reformation, some provision was made for their relief; and so it was with the ministers deprived by the Long Parliament and afterwards by Cromwell: at both those periods, one-fifth of the income of the living was uniformly reserved for the benefit of the person ejected. But in this case, these two thousand ministers were turned out at once upon the world without the least means of subsistence, and forbidden even to keep "any public or private school," or to "instruct youth in any private family." "And now," says Baxter, "came in the great inundation of calamities, which in many streams; overwhelmed thousands of godly Christians together with their pastors. As for example; 1. Hundreds of able ministers with their wives and children had neither house nor bread; for many of them had not past thirty or forty pounds per annum apiece, and most but sixty or eighty pounds per annum, and few had any considerable estates of their own. 2. The people's poverty was so great, that they were not able much to relieve their ministers. 3. The jealousy of the state and the malice of their enemies were so great, that people that were willing durst not be known to give to their ejected pastors, lest it should be said that they maintained schism, or were making collections for some plot or insurrection. 4. The hearts of the people were much grieved for the loss of their pastors. 5. Many places had such set over them in their steads, as they could not with conscience or comfort commit the conduct of their souls to: and they were forced to own all these, &c." "by

* Narrative, Part II. p. 38.

receiving the sacrament in the several parishes whether they would or not. 6. Those that did not this were to be excommunicated, and then to have a writ sued out against them *de excommunicato capiendo*, to lay them in the jail, and seize on their estates." He lengthens out this catalogue of evils by enumerating the many divisions among ministers and among Christians which the great controversy of the time occasioned, the murmuring and complaining of the people against the government; and he concludes with the remark that "by all these sins, these murmurings, and these violations of the interest of the church and the cause of Christ, the land was prepared for that further inundation of calamities, by war and plague, and scarcity, which hath since brought it near to desolation."

Till this time Baxter had lived unmarried. But soon after the Bartholomew ejection, when in his forty-seventh year, he married a lady of good family much younger than himself, whose affection and assiduity did much to alleviate the distresses that were now to follow him. Her name was Margaret Charlton. She had been one of his flock during some part of his ministry at Kidderminster, and under his preaching became eminently pious. The attachment between them seems to have commenced some time before, though when they were married she was not more than twenty-three years of age. Nearly a year before the event actually took place, he says, "About this time, it was famed at the court that I was married, which went as the matter of a most heinous crime, which I never heard charged by them on any man but me. Bishop Morley divulged it with all the odium he could possibly put upon it;"—"and it every where rung about, partly as a wonder and partly as a crime." "And I think the king's marriage was scarce more talked of than mine."*

He was at last married, Sept. 10, 1662. "She consented," he says, "to these conditions of our marriage: First, that I should have nothing that before our marriage was hers; that I who wanted no earthly supplies might not seem to marry her for covetousness. Secondly, that she would so alter her affairs that I might be

* Narrative, Part II. p. 334

entangled in no lawsuits. Thirdly, that she would expect none of my time which my ministerial work should require.”*

The Act of Uniformity had hardly taken effect when the idea was thrown out by the court that some indulgence might yet be granted to nonconformists, by the exertion of the royal prerogative. The king hoped in this way to secure some favor for his catholic friends. He knew that it would be impossible to set up a toleration of the Romish worship in the existing state of public feeling; and there can be no reasonable doubt that he and many about the court, hoped that the oppression of the protestant nonconformists would create a necessity for a general toleration, under which he might show what favor he pleased to the catholics.

Accordingly “on the 26th of December, 1662, the king sent forth a declaration expressing his purpose to grant some indulgence or liberty in religion not excluding the Papists, many of whom had deserved so well of him.” But the great body of nonconformists, unwilling to be even indirectly instrumental in promoting such a design, stood aloof from the court. It was intimated to some of them, that it would be acceptable if they would own this declaration by returning thanks for the offered indulgence. The design was, that they should be the means of securing this advantage for the Papists; and that they should stand between the king and the odium of such a measure. The Presbyterians, persuaded of the unlawfulness of tolerating any “intolerable” error, like the errors of popery, could not give thanks for an indulgence on such terms. The Independents, however, having clearer views of the great doctrine of religious liberty, were hindered by no conscientious scruples; and were always ready to accept and to ask for a toleration on the broadest basis. But the king’s declaration, like every measure of his which looked towards the toleration of popery, was strongly resisted by the parliament.

It was soon discovered that the laws on the subject of religious uniformity, with all their pains and penalties, were by no means to be a dead letter. Mr. Calamy - happening to be present at the

* Breviate of the life of Mrs. Margaret Baxter, quoted by Orme.

church where he had formerly been pastor; on an occasion when the preacher failed, and the congregation was about to disperse, was persuaded to preach under the impression that there was no provision of the law applicable to such a case; but was the next week sent to Newgate prison. After a few days imprisonment, he was released; but his release displeased the Commons who were beginning to watch against any exercise of that dispensing power, which they knew the king was disposed to set up for the benefit of his catholic friends. The imprisonment of ministers for preaching either publicly or privately, was a common thing. "As we were forbidden to preach," says Baxter, "so we were vigilantly watched in private, that we might not exhort one another, or pray together; and, as I foretold them oft, how they would use us when they had silenced us, every meeting for prayer was called a dangerous meeting for sedition, or a conventicle at least. I will now give but one instance of their kindness to myself. One Mr. Beale, in Hatton Garden, having a son, his only child, and very towardly and hopeful, long sick of a dangerous fever, who had been brought so low that the physicians thought he would die, desired a few friends, of whom I was one, to meet at his house to pray for him. And because it pleased God to hear our prayers, and that very night to restore him; his mother shortly after falling sick of a fever, we were desired to meet to pray for her recovery, the last day when she was near to death. Among those who were to be there, it fell out that Dr. Bates and I did fail them, and could not come; but it was known at Westminster, that we were appointed to be there, whereupon two justices of the peace were procured from the distant parts of the town, one from Westminster and one from Clerkenwell, to come with the parliament's serjeant at arms to apprehend us. They came in the evening, when part of the company were gone. There were then only a few of their kindred, beside two or three ministers to pray. They came upon them into the room where the gentlewoman lay ready to die, drew the curtains, and took some of their names; but, missing of their prey, returned disappointed. What a joy would it have been to them that reproached us as Presbyterian, seditious schismatics, to have found

but such an occasion as praying with a dying woman, to have laid us up in prison!"*

In the beginning of the following year, the talk of liberty to the silenced ministers began to be revived; and it was much debated among them and their friends whether toleration as dissenters, or comprehension as a part of the establishment, were the more desirable scheme. But "instead of indulgence and comprehension," says Baxter, "on the last day of June, 1663, the bill against private meetings for religious exercises passed the House of Commons, and shortly after was made a law. The sum of it was, 'that every person above sixteen years old, who is present at any meeting under color or pretence of any exercise of religion, in other manner than is allowed by the liturgy or practice of the church of England, where there are five persons more than that household, shall, for the first offense, by a justice of peace be recorded, and sent to jail three months, till he pay five pounds; and, for the second offense, six months, till he pay ten pounds; and the third time, being convicted by a jury, shall be banished to some of the American plantations, excepting New-England or Virginia.' The calamity of the act, beside the main matter, was, 1. That it was made so ambiguous, that no man that ever I met with could tell what was a violation of it, and what not; not knowing what was allowed by the liturgy or practice in the church of England in families, because the liturgy meddled not with families; and among the diversity of family practice, no man knoweth what to call the practice of the church. 2. Because so much power was given to the justices of the peace to record a man an offender without a jury, and if he did it causelessly, we were without any remedy, seeing he was made a judge."

"And now came in the people's trial, as well as the ministers'. While the danger and sufferings lay on the ministers alone, the people were very courageous, and exhorted them to stand it out and preach till they went to prison. But when it came to be their own case, they were as venturous till they were once surprised and imprisoned; but then their judgments were much altered, and

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 431, 432.

they that censured ministers before as cowardly, because they preached not publicly, whatever followed, did now think that it was better to preach often in secret to a few, than but once or twice in public to many; and that secrecy was no sin, when it tended to the furtherance of the work of the Gospel, and to the church's good. Especially the rich were as cautious as the ministers. But yet their meetings were so ordinary, and so well known, that it greatly tended to the jailers' commodity.

"It was a great strait that the people were in, especially who dwelt near any busy officer, or malicious enemy. Many durst not pray in their families, if above four persons came in to dine with them." "Some thought they might venture if they withdrew into another room, and left the strangers by themselves: but others said, it is all one if they be in the same house, though out of hearing, when it cometh to the judgment of the justices. In London, where the houses are contiguous, some thought if they were in several houses and heard one another through the wall or a window, it would avoid the law: but others said, it is all in vain whilst the justice is judge whether it was a meeting or no. Great lawyers said, If you come on a visit or business, though you be present at prayer or sermon, it is no breach of the law, because you met not *on pretence of a religious exercise*: but those that tried them said, such words are but wind, when the justices come to judge you.

"And here the Quakers did greatly relieve the sober people for a time; for they were so resolute, and so gloried in their constancy and sufferings, that they assembled openly at the Bull and Mouth, near Aldersgate, and were dragged away daily to the common jail; and yet desisted not, but the rest came the next day, nevertheless: so that the jail at Newgate was filled with them. Abundance of them died in prison, and yet they continued their assemblies still. They would sometimes meet only to sit still in silence, when, as they said, the Spirit did not speak: and it was a great question, whether this silence was a religious exercise not allowed by the liturgy, &c."*

* Narrative, Part II. pp. 435, 436.

Notwithstanding all this persecution, many of the non conformists, including such men as Baxter and Bates and Calamy, insisted on the propriety of occasional communion with the church of England by attending on the public worship at the parish churches, and by receiving the Lord's supper at the hands of the more serious and exemplary among the established clergy. This occasioned an unhappy division among those who at such a time needed to act in concert; and it limited the influence of these men with their suffering exasperated brethren.

The opportunity of doing good by public preaching being at an end, Baxter looked about for some retirement where he might pursue his studies, and especially his writings, with better health and more tranquility than he could hope to enjoy in the city. He removed to Acton, six miles from London, July 14. 1663;—"where," he says, "I followed my studies privately, in quietness, and went every Lord's-day to the public assembly, when there was any preaching or catechising, and spent the rest of the day with my family, and a few poor neighbors that came in; spending now and then a day in London. The next year, 1664, I had the company of divers godly, faithful friends that tabled with me in summer, with whom I solaced myself with much content."

"March 26, 1665, being the Lord's-day, as I was preaching in a private house, where we received the Lord's supper, a bullet came in at the window among us, passed by me, and narrowly escaped the head of a sister-in-law of mine that was there, but hurt none of us. We could never discover whence it came."

Having followed him to this retirement, we may here continue the enumeration of his publications to the close of the year 1665, with which date he concludes the second part of the Narrative of his life. Thirty-eight separate works of his, it will be recollected, were published before the restoration.*

39. "A Sermon of Repentance, preached before the Honorable House of Commons, &c. at their late solemn fast for the settlement of these nations."—4to. published in 1660.

40. "Right Rejoicing, &c. A Sermon preached at St. Paul's

* See pp. 145, 164.

before the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, and the several Companies of the city of London, on May 10th, 1660, appointed by both houses of Parliament to be a day of solemn thanksgiving, &c." 4to. published in 1660. The occasions of these two sermons have already been described.*

41. "The Life of Faith; as it is the evidence of things not seen; a sermon preached before the king, July 22, 1660." 4to. published in 1660.†

42. "The successive visibility of the Church," 12mo. published in 1660. This was one of his controversial works against the Roman Catholics.

43. "The Vain Religion of the Formal Hypocrite, and the mischief of an unbridled tongue as against religion, rulers, or dissenters, described in several sermons preached at the abbey in Westminster, before many members of the Honorable House of Commons, 1660: And the Fool's prosperity the occasion of his destruction; a sermon preached at Covent Garden. Both published to heal the effects of some hearer's misunderstandings and misreports." 12mo. published in Nov. 1660.‡

44. "The Last Work of a Believer: His passing prayer, recommending his departing spirit to Christ to be received by him. Prepared for the funeral of Mary the widow, first of Francis Charlton, Esq., and after of Thomas Hanmer, Esq." &c. 4to. published in January, 1661. This was the funeral sermon for the mother of his intended wife.

45. After the Savoy Conference, "somebody," he says, "printed our papers, most of them, given in to them in that treaty; of which the petition for peace and the Reformed Liturgy, (except a prayer for the king,) the large reply to their answer of our exceptions, and the two last addresses, were my writing." This was in 1661.

46. "The Mischiefs of Self-ignorance and the Benefits of Self-acquaintance, opened in divers sermons at Dunstan's West, and published in answer to the accusations of some and the desires of others." 8vo. published in 1661. "It was fitted," he says, "to

* See pp. 169, 170.

† See pp. 171, 172.

‡ See p. 207.

the disease of this furious age in which each man is ready to devour others because they do not know themselves."

47. "Baxter's Account to the inhabitants of Kidderminster of the reasons of his being forbid to preach among them." 4to. published in 1662.

48. "A Saint or a Brute: The certain Necessity and Excellency of Holiness so plainly proved, and urgently applied, as by the blessing of God may convince and save the miserable, impenitent, ungodly sensualists, if they will not let the Devil hinder them from a sober and serious reading and considering. To be communicated by the charitable that desire the conversion and salvation of souls, while the patience of God, and the day of grace and hope continue." 4to. published in 1662. This is a work of several hundred pages.

49. "Now or Never: The holy, serious, diligent believer, justified, encouraged, excited, and directed; and the opposers and neglecters convinced, by the light of scripture and reason." Published in 1663.

50. "Fair Warning; or twenty-five reasons against the toleration of popery." 8vo. published in 1663. There seems to be some doubt whether this pamphlet ought to be numbered among the writings of Baxter.

51. "The Divine Life, in three treatises; the first of the knowledge of God; the second of walking with God; the third of conversing with God in solitude." 4to. published in 1664. This work was occasioned by a request of the Countess of Balcarras. She was about returning to Scotland after a residence of some time in England, and having been much profited by Baxter's writings and by his preaching, desired him to preach the last sermon which she was to hear from him, on these words of Christ, 'Behold the hour cometh, yea is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.' The sermon thus preached is the third part of the work; he says he prefixed the other two treatises to make it more considerable. He apologizes for the work, in his life, by saying that it was, "but popular sermons preached in the midst of diverting business, accusations, and malicious clamors."

How much freedom of the press the non conformists enjoyed appears from an incident which he records respecting this book. "When I offered it to the press, I was fain to leave out the quantity of one sermon in the end of the second treatise, (that God took Enoch,) wherein I showed what a mercy it is to one that walked with God, to be taken to him from this world ; because it is a dark, wicked, malicious, incapable, treacherous, deceitful world, &c. All which, the bishop's chaplain must have expunged, because men would think it was all spoken of them."

-52. In 1665 he published only three single sheets ; two, designed "for the use of poor families that cannot buy greater books, or will not read them ;" and the third, published at the time of the plague, entitled, "Directions for the sick."

Among his earliest employments at Acton must have been the preparation of his Narrative of his own life, the first part of which was written mostly in 1664, and the second part in 1665. At the conclusion of the second part of this narrative, he writes thus,—

"And now, after all the breaches on the churches, the ejection of the ministers, and impenitency under all, wars and plague, and danger of famine began at once on us. War with the Hollanders, which yet continueth ; and the dryest winter, spring, and summer, that ever man alive knew, or our forefathers mention of late ages : so that the grounds were burnt like the highways, where the cattle should have fed. The meadow grounds where I lived, bare but four loads of hay, which before bare forty ; the plague hath seized on the famousest and most excellent city of Christendom, and at this time nearly 8,300 die of all diseases in a week. It hath scattered and consumed the inhabitants ; multitudes being dead and fled. The calamities and cries of the diseased and impoverished, are not to be conceived by those that are absent from them. Every man is a terror to his neighbor and himself : and God, for our sins, is a terror to us all. O ! how is London, the place which God hath honored with his Gospel above all places of the earth, laid low in horrors, and wasted almost to desolation by the wrath of that God, whom England hath contemned ! A God-hating generation are consumed in their sins, and the righteous are also taken away as from greater evils yet to come." "Yet, under

all these desolations, the wicked are hardened, and cast all on the fanatics; the true dividing fanatics and sectaries are not yet humbled for former miscarriages, but cast all on the prelates and imposers; and the ignorant vulgar are stupid, and know not what use to make of any thing they feel. But thousands of the sober, prudent, faithful servants of the Lord are mourning in secret, and waiting for his salvation; in humility and hope they are staying themselves on God, and expecting what he will do with them. From London the plague is spread through many counties, especially next London, where few places, especially corporations, are free: *which makes me oft groan, and wish that London, and all the corporations of England, would review the Corporation Act, and their own acts, and speedily repent.*

“Leaving most of my family at Acton, compassed about with the plague, at the writing of this, through the mercy of my dear God, and Father in Christ, I am hitherto in safety and comfort in the house of my dearly beloved and honored friend, Mr. Richard Hampden, of Hampden, in Buckinghamshire, the true heir of his famous father’s sincerity, piety, and devotedness to God; whose person and family the Lord preserve; honor them that honor him, and be their everlasting rest and portion.”*

Hampden, September 28, 1665.

* Narrative, Part II. p. 448

PART FIFTH.

THE reader has now traced the series of events in the life of Richard Baxter to the fiftieth year of his age. We have seen him approving himself the man of God in the camp and in the court, in the rural parish and in the great metropolis ; we are now to see him in the decline of life, like the illustrious poet his cotemporary, “ unchanged,”

“ On evil days though fall’n and evil tongues,
In darkness and with dangers compassed round.”

At this period in his history, it is a privilege to have before us his own deliberate review of the changes which had been wrought upon his mind and heart, in his progress from youth to the commencement of his declining years. This review is the conclusion of the first part of his personal narrative, and was written in 1664, the forty-ninth year of his age. It is presented here, much abridged.

“ Because it is soul-experiments which those who urge me to this kind of writing do expect that I should, especially, communicate to others ; and I have said little of God’s dealings with my soul since the time of my younger years, I shall only give the reader so much satisfaction as to acquaint him truly what change God hath made upon my mind and heart since those unriper times, and wherein I now differ in judgment and disposition from myself. And for any more particular account of heart occurrences, and God’s operations on me, I think it somewhat unsavory to recite them, seeing God’s dealings are much the same with all his servants in the main, and the points wherein he varieth, are usually so small, that I think such not fit to be repeated.” “ The true reason why I do adventure so far upon the censure of the world as to tell them wherein the case is altered with me, is, that I may take off young unexperienced Christians from over confidence in their first apprehensions, or overvaluing their first degrees of grace, or too much applauding and following unfurnished, unexperienced men ; and that they may be directed what mind and course of life to prefer, by the judgment of one that hath tried both before them.

“ 1. The temper of my mind hath somewhat altered with the temper of my body. When I was young I was more vigorous, affectionate, and fervent, in preaching, conference, and prayer, than, ordinarily, I can be now. My style was more extemporate and lax, but, by the advantage of warmth, and a very familiar moving voice and utterance, my preaching then did more affect the auditory, than many of the last years before I gave over preaching. But what I delivered then was much more raw, and had more passages that would not bear the trial of accurate judgments ; and my discourses had both less substance and less judgment than of late.

“ 2. My understanding was then quicker, and could more easily manage any thing that was newly presented to it upon a sudden : but it is since better furnished, and acquainted with the ways of truth and error, and with a multitude of particular mistakes of the world, which then I was the more in danger of, because I had only the faculty of knowing them, but did not actually know them. I was then like a man of quick understanding, that was to travel a way which he never went before, or to cast up an account which he never labored in before, or to play on an instrument of music which he never saw before. I am now like one of somewhat a slower understanding, who is traveling a way which he hath often gone, and is casting up an account which he hath often cast up and hath ready at hand, and that is playing on an instrument which he hath frequently used : so that I can very confidently say my judgment is much sounder and firmer now than it was then. When I peruse the writings which I wrote in my younger years, I can find the footsteps of my unfurnished mind, and of my emptiness and insufficiency : so that the man that followed my judgment then, was liker to have been misled by me than he that should follow it now.

“ And yet, that I may not say worse than it deserveth of my former measure of understanding, I shall truly tell you what change I find now in the perusal of my own writings. Those points which then I thoroughly studied, my judgment is the same of now as it was then, and therefore in the substance of my religion, and in those controversies which I then searched into with some extraordinary diligence, I find not my mind disposed to a change : but in divers points that I studied slightly, and by the halves, and in ma-

ny things which I took upon trust from others, I have found since that my apprehensions were either erroneous or very lame." " And this token of my weakness accompanied those my younger studies, that I was very apt to start up controversies in the way of my practical writings, and also more desirous to acquaint the world with all that I took to be the truth, and to assault those books by name which I thought did tend to deceive them, and did contain unsound and dangerous doctrine ; and the reason of all this was, that I was then in the vigor of my youthful apprehensions ; and at the new appearance of any sacred truth, it was more apt to affect me and be highlier valued than afterwards, when commonness had dulled my delight ; and I did not sufficiently discern then how much, in most of our controversies, is verbal, and upon mutual mistakes. And, withal, I knew not how impatient divines were of being contradicted, nor how it would stir up all their powers to defend what they have once said, and to rise up against the truth which is thus thrust upon them as the mortal enemy of their honor : and I knew not how hardly men's minds are changed from their former apprehensions, be the evidence never so plain."

" 3. In my youth, I was quickly past my fundamentals, and was running up into a multitude of controversies, and greatly delighted with metaphysical and scholastic writings, (though, I must needs say, my preaching was still on the necessary points ;) but the elder I grew, the smaller stress I laid upon these controversies and curiosities, though still my intellect abhorreth confusion."

" As the stock of the tree affordeth timber to build houses and cities, when the small though higher multifarious branches are but to make a crow's nest or a blaze, so the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, of heaven and holiness, doth build up the soul to endless blessedness, and affordeth it solid peace and comfort ; when a multitude of school niceties serve but for vain janglings and hurtful diversions and contentions. And yet I would not dissuade my reader from the perusal of Aquinas, Scotus, Ockham, Arminius, Durandus, or any such writer ; for much good may be gotten from them : but I would persuade him to study and live upon the essential doctrines of Christianity and godliness, incomparably above them all. And that he may know that my testimony is some-

what regardable, I presume to say that in this, I as much gainsay my natural inclination to subtilty and accurateness in knowing, as he is like to do by his if he obey my counsel."

"4. This is another thing which I am changed in, that whereas in my younger days I never was tempted to doubt of the truth of Scripture or Christianity, but all my doubts and fears were exercised at home, about my own sincerity and interest in Christ, and this was it which I called unbelief; since then my sorest assaults have been on the other side, and such they were, that had I been void of internal experience and the adhesion of love, and the special help of God, and had not discerned more reason for my religion than I did when I was younger, I had certainly apostatized to infidelity. I am now, therefore, much more apprehensive than heretofore of the necessity of well grounding men in their religion, and especially of the witness of the indwelling Spirit." "For my part, I must profess, that when my belief of things eternal and of the Scripture is most clear and firm, all goeth accordingly in my soul, and all temptations to sinful compliances, worldliness, or flesh-pleasing, do signify worse to me than an invitation to the stocks or Bedlam. And no petition seemeth more necessary to me than,—Lord, increase our faith; I believe, help thou my unbelief.

"5. Among truths certain in themselves, all are not equally certain to me; and even of the mysteries of the gospel I must needs say, with Mr. Richard Hooker, that whatever men may pretend, the subjective certainty cannot go beyond the objective evidence. Therefore I do, more of late than ever, discern a necessity of a methodical procedure in maintaining the doctrine of christianity, and of beginning at natural verities as presupposed fundamentally to supernatural truths; though God may when he please reveal all at once, and even natural truths by supernatural revelation. And it is a marvellous great help to my faith, to find it built on so sure foundations, and so consonant to the law of nature."

"6. In my younger years, my trouble for sin was most about my actual failings; but now I am much more troubled for inward defects, and omission or want of the vital duties or graces in the soul." "Had I all the riches of the world, how gladly would I

give them for a fuller knowledge, belief, and love, of God and everlasting glory ! These wants are the greatest burden of my life, which oft maketh my life itself a burden. I cannot find any hope of reaching so high in these, while I am in the flesh, as I once hoped before this time to have attained ; which maketh me the wearier of this sinful world, that is honored with so little of the knowledge of God.

“7. Heretofore, I placed much of my religion in tenderness of heart, and grieving for sin, and penitential tears ; and less of it in the love of God, and studying his love and goodness, and in his joyful praises, than now I do. Then I was little sensible of the greatness and excellency of love and praise ;” “ but my conscience now looketh at love and delight in God, and praising him, as the top of all my religious duties ; for which it is that I value and use the rest.

“8. My judgment is much more for frequent and serious meditation on the heavenly blessedness than it was in my younger days. I then thought that a sermon of the attributes of God, and the joys of heaven, was not the most excellent ; and was wont to say, ‘ Every body knoweth that God is great and good, and that heaven is a blessed place ; I had rather hear how I may attain it.’ And nothing pleased me so well as the doctrine of regeneration and the marks of sincerity, which was because it was suitable to me in that state ; but now I had rather read, hear, or meditate, on God and heaven, than on any other subject : for I perceive that it is the object which altereth and elevateth the mind ; which will resemble that which it most frequently feedeth on.

“9. I was once wont to meditate most on my own heart, and to dwell all at home, and look little higher. I was still poring either on my sins or wants, or examining my sincerity ; but now, though I am greatly convinced of the need of heart-acquaintance and employment, yet I see more need of a higher work, and that I should look often upon Christ and God and heaven. At home I can find distempers to trouble me, and some evidences of my peace ; but it is above that I must find matter of delight and joy, and love, and peace itself. Therefore I would have one thought at home upon

myself and sins, and many thoughts above upon the high and amiable and beatifying objects.

“ 10. Heretofore I knew much less than now, and yet was not half so much acquainted with my ignorance : I had a great delight in the daily, new discoveries which I made, and of the light which shined in upon me, like a man that cometh into a country where he never was before ; but I little knew either how imperfectly I understood those very points whose discovery so much delighted me, or how much might be said against them, or how many things I was yet a stranger to.”

“ 11. Accordingly I had then a far higher opinion of learned persons and books than I now have ; for what I wanted myself, I thought every reverend divine had attained, and was familiarly acquainted with. And what books I understood not, by reason of the strangeness of the terms or matter, I the more admired, and thought that others understood their worth. But now experience hath constrained me against my will to know, that reverend learned men are imperfect, and know but little as well as I, especially those that think themselves the wisest.”

“ 12. And at first I took more upon my author's credit than now I can do : and when an author was highly commended to me by others, or pleased me in some part, I was ready to entertain the whole ; whereas now I take and leave in the same author, and dissent in some things from him that I like best, as well as from others.

“ 13. At first, I was greatly inclined to go with the highest in controversies on one side or other ; as with Dr. Twisse and Mr. Rutherford, and Spanhemius de Providentia et Gratia, &c. But now I can so easily see what to say against both extremes, that I am much more inclinable to reconciling principles.

“ 14. At first, the style of authors took as much with me as the argument, and made the arguments seem more forcible, but now I judge not of truth at all by any such ornaments or accidents, but by its naked evidence.

“ 15. I now see more good and more evil in all men, than heretofore I did. I see that good men are not so good as I once thought they were, but have more imperfections ; and that nearer approach and

fuller trial do make the best appear more weak and faulty than their admirers at a distance think. And I find that few are so bad as either malicious enemies, or censorious separating professors do imagine."

"16. I less admire gifts of utterance and the bare profession of religion than I once did; and have much more charity for many who by the want of gifts do make an obscurer profession." "Experience hath opened to me what odious crimes may consist with high profession; and I have met with divers obscure persons, not indeed noted for any extraordinary profession or forwardness in religion, but only to live a quiet, blameless life, whom I have after found to have long lived, as far as I could discern, a truly godly and sanctified life; only their prayers and duties were, by accident, kept secret from other men's observation. Yet he that upon this pretence would confound the godly and the ungodly, may as well go about to lay heaven and hell together.

"17. I am not so narrow in my special love as heretofore: being less censorious, and taking more than I did for saints, it must needs follow that I love more as saints than I did formerly."

"18. I am not so narrow in my principles of church communion as once I was." "I am not for narrowing the church more than Christ himself alloweth us; nor for robbing him of any of his flock."

"19. Yet I am more apprehensive than ever of the great use and need of ecclesiastical discipline."

"20. I am much more sensible of the evil of schism, and of the separating humor, and of gathering parties and making several sects in the church, than I was heretofore. For the effects have showed us more of the mischiefs.

"21. I am much more sensible how prone many young professors are to spiritual pride, and self-conceitedness, and unruliness, and division, and so to prove the grief of their teachers, and fire-brands in the church; and how much of a minister's work lieth in preventing this, and humbling and confirming such young inexperienced professors, and keeping them in order in their progress in religion.

"22. Yet I am more sensible of the sin and mischief of using men cruelly in matters of religion, and of pretending men's good

and the order of the church, for acts of inhumanity or uncharitableness."

"23. My soul is much more afflicted with the thoughts of this miserable world, and more drawn out in desire of its conversion, than heretofore. I was wont to look but little further than England in my prayers, not considering the state of the rest of the world; or if I prayed for the conversion of the Jews, that was almost all. But now, as I better understand the case of the world, and the method of the Lord's prayer; there is nothing in the world that lieth so heavy upon my heart, as the thought of the miserable nations of the earth. It is the most astonishing part of all God's providence to me, that he so far forsaketh almost all the world, and confineth his special favor to so few; that so small a part of the world hath the profession of Christianity, in comparison of heathens, Mahometans, and other infidels; that among professed Christians there are so few that are saved from gross delusions, and have any competent knowledge; and that among those there are so few that are seriously religious, and who truly set their hearts on heaven. I cannot be affected so much with the calamities of my own relations or the land of my nativity, as with the case of the heathen, Mahometan, and ignorant nations of the earth. No part of my prayers are so deeply serious as that for the conversion of the infidel and ungodly world, that God's name may be sanctified, and his kingdom come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Nor was I ever before so sensible what a plague the division of languages is, which hindereth our speaking to them for their conversion; nor what a great sin tyranny is, which keepeth out the Gospel from most of the nations of the world. Could we but go among Tartars, Turks, and heathens, and speak their language, I should be but little troubled for the silencing of eighteen hundred ministers at once, in England, nor for all the rest that were cast out here, and in Scotland, and in Ireland; there being no employment in the world so desirable in my eyes as to labor for the winning of such miserable souls; which maketh me greatly honor Mr. John Elliot, the apostle of the Indians in New-England, and whoever else have labored in *such* work.

"24. Yet am I not so much inclined to pass a peremptory sen-

tence of damnation upon all that never heard of Christ; having some more reason than I knew of before, to think that God's dealing with such is unknown to us; and that the ungodly here among us Christians, are in a far worse case than they.

"25. My censures of the Papists do much differ from what they were at first. I then thought that their errors in the doctrine of faith were their most dangerous mistakes." "But the great and irreconcilable differences lie in their church tyranny and usurpations, and in their great corruptions of God's worship, together with their befriending of ignorance and vice."

"26. I am deeplier afflicted for the disagreements of Christians than I was when I was a younger Christian. Except the case of the infidel world, nothing is so bad and grievous to my thoughts as the case of the divided churches."

"27. I have spent much of my studies about the terms of Christian concord, etc."

"28. I am farther than ever I was from expecting great matters of unity, splendor, or prosperity, to the church on earth, or that saints should dream of a kingdom of this world, or flatter themselves with the hope of a golden age, or reigning over the ungodly, till there be a new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. On the contrary, I am more apprehensive that suffering must be the church's most ordinary lot; and indeed Christians must be self-denying cross bearers, even where there are none but formal, nominal Christians to be the cross-makers; and though, ordinarily, God would have vicissitudes of summer and winter, day and night, that the church may grow extensively in the summer of prosperity, and intensively and radically in the winter of adversity; yet, usually their night is longer than their day, and that day itself hath its storms and tempests."

"29. I do not lay so great a stress upon the external modes and forms of worship, as many young professors do." "I cannot be of their opinion, that think God will not accept him that prayeth by the Common Prayer-book; and that such forms are a self-invented worship, which God rejecteth; nor can I be of their mind that say the like of extemporary prayers."

"30. I am much less regardful of the approbation of man, and

set much lighter by contempt or applause, than I did long ago: I am oft suspicious that this is not only from the increase of self-denial and humility, but partly from my being glutted and surfeited with human applause. All worldly things appear most vain and unsatisfactory when we have tried them most. But though I feel that this hath some hand in the effect, yet, as far as I can perceive, the knowledge of man's nothingness, and God's transcendent greatness, with whom it is that I have most to do, and the sense of the brevity of human things, and the nearness of eternity, are the principal causes of this effect; which some have imputed to self-conceitedness and morosity.

"31. I am more and more pleased with a solitary life; and though in a way of self-denial, I could submit to the most public life for the service of God, when he requireth it, and would not be unprofitable, that I might be private; yet I confess it is much more pleasing to myself to be retired from the world, and to have very little to do with men, and to converse with God and conscience and good books.

"32. Though I was never much tempted to the sin of covetousness, yet my fear of dying was wont to tell me that I was not sufficiently loosened from this world: but I find that it is comparatively very easy to me to be loose from this world, but hard to live by faith above. To despise earth, is easy to me; but not so easy to be acquainted and conversant with heaven. I have nothing in this world which I could not easily let go; but to get satisfying apprehensions of the other world is the great and grievous difficulty.

"33. I am much more apprehensive than long ago of the odiousness and danger of the sin of pride. Scarcely any sin appeareth more odious to me." "I think so far as any man is proud, he is kin to the devil, and utterly a stranger to God and to himself. It is a wonder that it should be a possible sin to men that still carry about with them, in soul and body, such humbling matter of remedy as we all do.

"34. I more than ever lament the unhappiness of the nobility, gentry, and great ones of the world, who live in such temptations

to sensuality, curiosity, and wasting of their time about a multitude of little things."

"35. I am much more sensible than heretofore, of the breadth, and length, and depth, of the radical, universal, odious sin of selfishness, and therefore have written so much against it; and of the excellency and necessity of self-denial, and of a public mind, and of loving our neighbor as ourselves.

"36. I am more and more sensible that most controversies have more need of right stating than of debating; and if my skill be increased in any thing it is in that, in narrowing controversies by explication, and separating the real from the verbal, and proving to many contenders that they differ less than they think they do.

"37. I am more solicitous than I have been about my duty to God, and less solicitous about his dealings with me."

"38. Though my works were never such as could be any temptation to me to dream of obliging God by proper merit in commutative justice, yet one of the most ready, constant, undoubted evidences of my uprightness and interest in his covenant, is, the consciousness of my living devoted to him. I the more easily believe the pardon of my failings through my Redeemer, while I know that I serve no other master, and that I know no other end, or trade, or business, but that I am employed in his work, and make it the object of my life to live to him in the world, notwithstanding my infirmities. This bent and business of my life, with my longing desires after perfection, in the knowledge and love of God, and in a holy and heavenly mind and life, are the two standing, constant, discernible evidences which most put me out of doubt of my sincerity."

"39. Though my habitual judgment, resolution, and scope of life, be still the same, yet I find a great mutability as to the actual apprehensions and degrees of grace; and consequently find that so mutable a thing as the mind of man, would never keep itself if God were not its keeper. When I have been seriously musing upon the reasons of Christianity, with the concurrent evidences methodically placed in their just advantages before my eyes, I am so clear in my belief of the Christian verities, that Satan hath little room for a temptation: but sometimes when he hath on a sudden set some

temptation before me, when the foresaid evidences have been out of the way, or less upon my thoughts, he hath, by such surprises, amazed me, and weakened my faith in the present act. So also as to the love of God, and trusting in him; sometimes when the motives are clearly apprehended, the duty is more easy and delightful; and at other times I am merely passive and dull, if not guilty of actual despondency and distrust.

“40. I am much more cautious in my belief of history than heretofore. Not that I run into their extreme, that will believe nothing, because they cannot believe all things. But I am abundantly satisfied by the experience of this age, that there is no believing two sorts of men, ungodly men, and partial men, though an honest heathen of no religion may be believed, where enmity against religion biasset him not; yet a debauched Christian, besides his enmity to the power and practice of his own religion, is seldom without some further bias of interest and faction, especially when these concur, and a man is both ungodly and ambitious, espousing an interest contrary to a holy, heavenly life, and also factious, embodying himself with a sect or party suited to his spirit and designs, there is no believing his word or oath.”

“Having transcribed thus much of a life which God hath read, and conscience hath read, and must further read, I humbly lament it, and beg pardon of it, as sinful, and too unequal and unprofitable. I warn the reader to amend that in his own, which he findeth to have been amiss in mine; confessing, also, that much hath been amiss which I have not here particularly mentioned, and that I have not lived according to the abundant mercies of the Lord. But what I have recorded hath been especially to perform my vows, and declare his praise to all generations, who hath filled up my days with his invaluable favors, and bound me to bless his name forever.”

“Having mentioned the changes which I think were for the better, I must add, that as I confessed many of my sins before, so I have been guilty of many since which, because materially they seemed small, have had the less resistance, and yet on the review, do trouble me more than if they had been greater, done in ignorance.” “To have sinned while I preached and wrote against sin, and had such abundant and great obligations from God, and

made so many promises against it, doth lay me very low : not so much in fear of hell, as in great displeasure against myself, and such self-aborrence as would cause revenge upon myself, were it not forbidden. When God forgiveth me, I cannot forgive myself ; especially for my rash words or deeds, by which I have seemed injurious and less tender and kind than I should have been to my near and dear relations, whose love abundantly obliged me. When such are dead, though we never differed in point of interest, or any other matter, every sour or cross provoking word which I gave them, maketh me almost irreconcilable to myself, and tells me how repentance brought some of old to pray to the dead whom they had wronged, to forgive them, in the hurry of their passion.

“ And though I before told the change of my judgment against provoking writings, I have had more will than skill since to avoid such. I must mention it by way of penitent confession, that I am too much inclined to such words in controversial writings, which are too keen and apt to provoke the person whom I write against.” “ I have a strong natural inclination to speak of every subject just as it is, and to call a spade a spade, and *verba rebus aptare* ; so as that the thing spoken of may be fullest known by the words ; which methinks is part of our speaking truly. But I unfeignedly confess that it is faulty, because imprudent ; for that is not a good means which doth harm, because it is not fitted to the end ; and because, whilst the readers think me angry, though I feel no passion at such times in myself, it is scandalous, and a hindrance to the usefulness of what I write : and especially, because though I feel no anger, yet which is worse, I know that there is some want of honor and love, or tenderness to others ; or else I should not be apt to use such words as open their weakness and offend them.” “ And I must say as the New England synodists, in their Defense against Mr. Davenport : ‘ We heartily desire, that as much as may be, all expressions and reflections may be forborne that tend to break the bond of love. Indeed, such is our infirmity, that the naked discovery of the fallacy or invalidity of another’s allegations or arguings is apt to provoke. This in disputes is unavoidable.’ And, therefore, I am less for a disputing way then ever, believing that it

tempteth men to bend their wits to defend their errors, and oppose the truth, and hindereth usually their information."

"That which I named before, on the by, is grown one of my great diseases; I have lost much of that zeal which I had to propagate any truths to others, save the mere fundamentals." "I am ready to think that people should quickly understand all in a few words; and if they cannot, lazily to despair of them, and leave them to themselves. I know the more that this is sinful in me, because it is partly so in other things, even about the faults of my servants or other inferiors; if three or four times warning do no good to them, I am much tempted to despair of them, turn them away, and leave them to themselves.

"I mention all these distempers that my faults may be a warning to others to take heed, as they call on myself for repentance and watchfulness. O Lord! for the merits, and sacrifice, and intercession of Christ, be merciful to me, a sinner, and forgive my known and unknown sins!"

It might have been supposed that so great a national calamity as "the plague in London," which in a few months swept to the grave one hundred thousand people in that city alone, would have brought the rulers of the nation, in church and state, to another temper. But as the monarch, while the pestilence was desolating his kingdom, was the same lustful and profligate wretch that he ever had been; so the prelates and their partizans, amid the terrors of that visitation, were as intent as ever on the oppression and extirpation of those whom they hated and feared as Puritans.

"The ministers that were silenced for Nonconformity, had ever since 1662 done their work very privately and to a few:" But "when the plague grew hot, most of the conformable ministers fled, and left their flocks in the time of their extremity; whereupon divers Nonconformists, pitying the dying and distressed people, who had none to call the impenitent to repentance, or to help men to prepare for another world, or to comfort them in their terrors, when about ten thousand died in a week, resolved that no obedience to the laws of mortal men whatsoever, could justify them in neglecting men's souls and bodies in such extremities." "Therefore, they resolved to stay with the people, and to go into the for-

saken pulpits, though prohibited, and to preach to the poor people before they died ; also to visit the sick and get what relief they could for the poor, especially those that were shut up. The face of death did so awaken both the preachers and the hearers, that the preachers exceeded themselves in lively, and fervent preaching, and the people crowded constantly to hear them ; and all was done with so great seriousness, that through the blessing of God, abundance were converted from their carelessness, impenitency, and youthful lusts and vanities ; and religion took that hold on many hearts, as could never afterwards be loosed."

At this time it was, the parliament being assembled at Oxford, whither the king had removed his court on account of the plague, that it seemed good in the eyes of Lord Clarendon, Archbishop Sheldon, and their associates, to visit the ejected ministers with new persecutions. A law was therefore enacted, Oct. 1665, entitled "an act to restrain nonconformists from inhabiting corporations." By this act every nonconforming minister was required to profess with a solemn oath, the unlawfulness of taking arms, against the king or those commissioned by him, upon any pretence whatsoever ; and to promise, with the same solemnity, never at any time to endeavor any alteration of government in church or state. After the 24th of the following March no nonconforming minister should be allowed, unless in passing the road to "come or be within five miles of any city, town corporate, or borough that sends burgesses to parliament, or within five miles of any parish, town or place wherein they had, since the act of oblivion, been parson, vicar, or lecturer, or where they had preached in any conventicle on any pretence whatsoever," without having first publicly taken and subscribed this oath. Every offense against this act was to be punished with a fine of forty pounds, one third of which should be for the informer ; and any two justices of the peace, upon oath made before them, were empowered to commit the offender to prison for six months without bail.

The ingenuity which framed this act was equal to the cruelty which inspired it. The oath prescribed was, upon the face of it, a denial of all the liberties of Englishmen ; insomuch that without much explanation no honest man could take it. The refusal of this

oath by any of those against whom the provisions of the act were directed, it was designed, should drive them from all those places, where they were known, or had any possible means of subsistence, either by their personal exertions or by the contributions of their friends. "In this strait," says Baxter, "those ministers that had any maintenance of their own, did find out some dwellings in obscure villages, or in some few market towns which were no corporations. And those that had nothing did leave their wives and children, and hid themselves abroad, and sometimes came secretly to them by night. But (God bringing good out of man's evil) many resolved to preach the more freely in cities and corporations till they went to prison." "Those ministers that were unmarried did easilier bear their poverty; but it pierceth a man's heart to have children crying, and sickness come upon them for want of wholesome food, and to have nothing to relieve them." "I heard but lately of a good man that was fain to spin as women do to get something towards his family's relief (which could be but little,) and being melancholy and diseased, it was but part of the day that he was able to do that. Another, for a long time had but little but brown rye bread and water, for himself, his wife, and many children, and when his wife was ready to lie in was to be turned out of door, for not paying his house rent. Yet God did mercifully provide some supplies, that few of them either perished or were exposed to sordid unseemly begging."

Baxter, notwithstanding the severity of this law, returned to Acton, just before it was to take effect. He found the church-yard like a plowed field with graves and many of his neighbors dead; but his own house, near the church-yard, uninfected, and that part of his family which he left there, all safe.

Just six months after his return, London was visited with another great calamity. On the third of Sept. 1666, commenced the "great fire." "The best and one of the fairest cities in the world was turned into ashes and ruins in three days space, with many score churches and the wealth and necessities of the inhabitants." "But some good rose out of all these evils. The churches being burnt, and the parish ministers gone for want of places and maintenance, the non-conformists were now more resolved than ever

to preach till they were imprisoned." Many of them kept their meetings very openly, "and prepared large rooms, and some of them plain chapels, with pulpits, seats, and galleries, for the reception of as many as could come. The people's necessity was now unquestionable. They had none other to hear, save in a few churches that would hold no considerable part of them ; so that to forbid them to hear the Nonconformists, was all one as to forbid them all public worship ; to forbid them to seek heaven when they had lost almost all that they had on earth ; to take from them their spiritual comforts after all their outward comforts were gone."

During the following year, the public calamities, including the ill-success of the war in which the king was engaged with the Dutch, conspired with some other causes to effect the overthrow of Lord Clarendon, the prime minister who had been the author of the act of uniformity, and the great enemy of the Puritans from the hour of the restoration. He was impeached in parliament, and barely escaping with his life, was condemned to perpetual banishment. He was honestly a protestant ; and with a true dignity he always frowned on the unspeakable profligacy of the king and his minions. At the same time, his talents, his experience, and his influence with parliament, made his services for a long time indispensable. But when popular indignation began to turn against the chancellor, Charles was glad to be rid of him ; nor is it probable that the monarch's joy was at all checked by any feeling of gratitude toward the man to whose almost superstitious loyalty he owed so much. "It was a notable providence of God" says Baxter, "that this man, who had been the great instrument of state, and had dealt so cruelly with the nonconformists, should thus, by his own friends, be cast out and banished, while those that he had persecuted were the most moderate in his cause, and many of them for him. It was a great ease that befel good people throughout the land by his dejection. For his way had been to decoy men into conspiracies, or to pretend plots, upon the rumor of which the innocent people of many counties were laid in prison ; so that no man knew when he was safe. Since then, the laws have been made more and more severe, yet a man knoweth a little better what to expect, when it is by a law that he is to be tried."

Clarendon was succeeded as prime minister by the Duke of Buckingham, a man as unprincipled and profligate as the king himself. Yet he having formerly out of opposition to Clarendon been a favorer of the nonconformists, that persecuted party found under his administration some temporary relief. The act for the suppression of conventicles, by which the hearers were made liable to fine and imprisonment was suffered to expire, and the ejected ministers began in many parts of the country to imitate the boldness which their brethren in the city had practiced since the fire, and for a while were connived at by the government beyond their own expectations. Baxter, from the beginning of his residence at Acton, had uniformly preached to his own family on the sabbath at such hours as did not interfere with the established worship ; and now he had his house full of the people of the place.

At this period, some of the leading Presbyterians were consulted by some of the more moderate among the bishops and some of the most eminent members of the administration, about a new scheme of comprehension and toleration for the protestant dissenters. Baxter has given a detailed account of this negotiation. It was defeated by the management of Archbishop Sheldon and his party, who contrived to get a proclamation from the king commanding the laws against the non-conformists to be put in execution, and especially the law banishing the ejected ministers from all corporate towns.

Thus the persecution was renewed, in the beginning of the year 1669 ; and the prisons again began to be filled with ministers of the gospel. Baxter mentions several of his neighbors who were among the sufferers, one " for teaching a few children," another " for teaching two knights sons in his own house ;" though he himself still escaped. Possibly one reason of this indulgence was the intimacy which he had formed about this time with one of the most illustrious men of that or any other age, whose relations to the government, as well as his personal character, might have checked for a while the malice of informers.

" The last year of my abode at Acton," he says, " I had the happiness of a neighbor whom I cannot easily praise above his worth. This was Sir Matthew Hale, lord chief baron of the ex-

chequer, whom all the judges and lawyers of England admired for his skill in law, and for his justice, and scholars honored for his learning, and I highly valued for his sincerity, mortification, self-denial, humility, conscientiousness, and his close fidelity in friendship. When he came first to town, I came not near him, (lest being a silenced and suspected person with his superiors, I should draw him also under suspicion, and do him wrong) till I had notice round about of his desire of my acquaintance. And I scarce ever conversed so profitably with any other person in my life."

"The conference which I had frequently with him, mostly about the immortality of the soul, and other philosophical and foundation points, was so edifying, that his very questions and objections did help me to more light than other men's solutions. Those who take none for religious, who frequent not private meetings, &c., took him for an excellently righteous, moral man: but I, who heard and read his serious expressions of the concerns of eternity, and saw his love to all good men, and the blamelessness of his life, thought better of his piety than of my own. When the people crowded in and out of my house to hear, he openly showed me so great respect before them at the door, and never spake a word against it, -as was no small encouragement to the common people to go on; though the other sort muttered that a judge should seem so far to countenance that which they took to be against the law."

The arm of the law however soon fell heavily on Baxter, notwithstanding this intimacy of his with the most illustrious of its ministers. The king himself—so Dean Ryves the parson of the parish afterwards said by way of apology—sent a message to the bishop of London, ordering him to see that Baxter's meeting was suppressed. Hereupon Baxter was apprehended; and having refused to take the Oxford oath, he was without any form of trial, committed by two justices of the peace to Clerkenwell prison for six months.

As he went to prison, he called on his friend Sergeant Fountain for legal advice, who on an examination of the mittimus advised him to seek for a *habeas corpus*, in the court of Common-pleas. On this subject he remained sometime in suspense. "My impris-

onment, he says, "was at present no great suffering to me, for I had an honest jailor, who showed me all the kindness he could. I had a large room, and the liberty of walking in a fair garden. My wife was never so cheerful a companion to me as in prison, and was very much against my seeking to be released. She had brought so many necessaries, that we kept house as contentedly and comfortably as at home, though in a narrow room, and I had the sight of more of my friends in a day, than I had at home in half a year. And I knew that if I got out against their will, my sufferings would be never the nearer to an end. But yet, on the other side, it was in the extremest heat of summer, when London was wont to have epidemical diseases. The hope of my dying in prison, I have reason to think was one great inducement to some of the instruments to move to what they did." Beside all this, his chamber was in a noisy place, so that he had little hope of sleeping but by day, and his strength was already so little that such a change would soon destroy his life. The number of his visitors too, made it impossible for him to do any thing but to entertain them. And after all he was in prison, with no leave at any time to go out of doors, much less to attend public worship, or to preach to any body but the inmates of his narrow chamber.

He was advised by some to petition the king ; but he declined any such movement. His friends at court, the earl of Manchester, the earl of Orrerry and others, exerted their influence with the king in vain. Charles only assured them that he would not be offended if Baxter sought a remedy at law. So an appeal to the law was resolved upon ; and when the question came before the Court of Common-pleas, he was released on the ground of some informalities in the commitment.

But here, according to his own statement, was but the beginning of his sufferings. His enemies were exasperated, and he was still in their power. He had an expensive hired house on his hands, which he could no longer occupy. He knew not what to do with his goods and his family. He must go out of the county of Middlesex ; and must go nowhere within five miles of any city or corporate town. "Where to find such a place, and therein a house, and how to remove my goods thither," he says,

“and what to do with my house till my time expired, were more trouble than my quiet prison by far.”

“The next habitation,” he adds, “which God chose for me, was at Totteridge, near Barnet, where for a year, I was fain with part of my family separated from the rest, to take a few mean rooms, which were so extremely smoky, and the place withal so cold, that I spent the winter in great pain ; one quarter of a year by a sore sciatica, and seldom free from such anguish.”

This removal was in the summer of 1669. Soon afterwards the act against conventicles was renewed by parliament, with new and more severe provisions, one of which was that no fault of the *mittimus* should make it void.

In the following summer, the duke of Lauderdale, who was proceeding to Scotland to effect some ecclesiastical changes there, sought an interview with Baxter, and offered him any situation in Scotland which he might choose, a church, a bishopric, or a place in one of the universities. Baxter declined this offer for several reasons ; his infirmities of body were such that his life, he was confident must be short, and would be shortened by a more northern climate ; he was employed in writing his *Methodus Theologiæ*, and expected that the remainder of his life which he estimated at about one year, would be barely sufficient to finish that work ; he had understood that Scotland was well supplied with preachers, and he apprehended the people there would have jealous thoughts of a stranger ; and finally the idea of removing his family, including an aged mother-in-law too infirm to travel, with all their goods and books to such a distance, deterred him from such an undertaking. “All this,” he says in his letter to the duke on the occasion, “concurreth to deprive me of this benefit of your lordship’s favor. But, my lord, there are other fruits of it which I am not altogether hopeless of receiving.—I am weary of the noise of contentious revilers, and have oft had thoughts to go into a foreign land, if I could find any where I might have a healthful air and quietness, that I might but live and die in peace. When I sit in a corner, and meddle with nobody, and hope the world will forget that I am alive, court, city, and country is still filled with clamors against me ; and when a preacher wanteth preferment, his way is to preach

or write a book against the nonconformists, and me by name.” “ I expect not that any favor or justice of my superiors should cure any of this, but (1.) if I might but be heard for myself before I be judged by them : (2.) if I might live quietly to follow my private studies, and might have once again the use of my books (which I have not seen for these ten years, and pay for a room for their standing at Kidderminster, where they are eaten by worms and rats, having no security for any quiet abode in any place enough to encourage me to send for them :) and if I might have the liberty that every beggar hath to travel from town to town—I mean but to London to oversee the press when any thing of mine is licensed for it : and (3.) if I be sent to Newgate for preaching Christ’s gospel, if I may have the favor of a better prison where I may but walk and write :—*these* I should take as very great favors, and acknowledge your lordship my benefactor if you procure them ; for I will not so much injure you as to desire, nor my reason as to expect, any greater matters.*

During all these years, while protestant dissenters were, so hotly persecuted, the papists had been comparatively at ease ; and the king and his most confidential servants had been pursuing the design of subverting the constitutional liberties and the protestant religion of the English nation. They favored the persecution of the nonconformists, hoping thus to bring about a general toleration which might be preparatory to the reestablishment of popery. They were willing to see the protestants divided, and each party more and more alienated from the other, that there might be no united opposition to their scheme. They knew that the puritans were of old the most uncompromising opposers of popery and the sturdiest asserters of liberty ; and they hoped that this party humbled by persecution might at last take shelter under the throne, and finding in the royal prerogative that protection which laws and parliaments had denied, might become the partisans of the power to which they owed their liberties. The first parliament elected after the king’s return, had proved thus far sufficiently venal and obsequious to answer all the purposes of the court, and had therefore been con-

* Narrative, Part III. pp. 75, 76.

tinued by successive prorogations ever since May, 1661. It is said that more than one hundred members of this body were kept in pay by the court. It is certain that a more infamous assembly under that name never disgraced the annals of England. The nation's money was given to the king almost without limit ; and had the force of Charles' character been equal to the wickedness of his heart, the monarchy of England might have been made as absolute as that of France. But the profligacy of the king was in this instance the safety of the people. The millions which Charles received from parliament, and the treasures acquired by the sale of Dunkirk, and by a secret treaty with France, which had for its object the establishment of an absolute monarchy and of the Roman Catholic religion in Great Britain, were lavished on harlots and parasites ; and the king was still kept in a state of dependence. Meanwhile the impiety and shameless debaucheries of the court, spread through all the orders of society. Drunkenness and impurity were the honored badges of loyalty ; not only seriousness, but even temperance and chastity, were signs of nonconformity, and prognostics of rebellion ; and the nation, in spite of all God's judgments, seemed ripening for the doom of Sodom.

At this time [1671] the scheme of the court was so far advanced, that it was judged safe to offer the persecuted nonconformists some sort of shelter under the wing of the prerogative. " The ministers in several parties," as Baxter informs us, " were oft encouraged to make their addresses to the king, only to acknowledge his clemency, by which they held their liberties, and to profess their loyalty. The king told them, that though such acts were made, he was against persecution, and hoped ere long to stand on his own legs, and then they should see how much he was against it."

About the first of January, 1672, the Exchequer was shut up ; " so that," in the words of Baxter, " whereas a multitude of merchants and others had put their money into the bankers' hands, and the bankers lent it to the king, and the king gave orders to pay out no more of it for a year, the murmur and complaint in the city were very great, that their estates should be, as they called it, so surprised." " Among others, all the money and estate, except ten pounds per annum, for eleven or twelve years, that I had in the

world, of my own, was there. Indeed it was not my own, which I will mention to counsel those that would do good, to do it speedily, and with all their might. I had got in all my life the just sum of one thousand pounds. Having no child, I devoted almost all of it to a charitable use, a free-school ; I used my best and ablest friends for seven years, with all the skill and industry I could, to help me to some purchase of house or land to lay it out on, that it might be accordingly settled. And though there were never more sellers, I could never, by all these friends, hear of any that reason could encourage a man to lay it out on, as secure, and a tolerable bargain ; so that I told them, I did perceive the devil's resistance of it, and did verily suspect that he would prevail, and I should never settle, but it would be lost. So hard is it to do any good, when a man is fully resolved."

This wholesale plunder, by which the king gained £1,400,000, was the first decided step in the development of his plan for the establishment of arbitrary power and the return of popery. The second step was the renewal of war, in alliance with France, against the Dutch republic, with the intent of blotting out that prosperous, free and protestant government from among the nations. The third movement, was the king's declaration published March 16, 1672, in which by virtue of his supreme power in all ecclesiastical matters, he suspended the execution of all penal laws in relation to religion ; and established at a word a system of toleration, under which a convenient number of places was to be licensed with certain restrictions, as places of public worship, for the use of protestant dissenters, while the papists were *only* to be indulged with the liberty of holding meetings for worship at their own discretion, in their own houses. The face of the declaration seemed to frown on the papists ; but it was instantly discovered that the operation of the system would be to give the Roman Catholics much more liberty than was offered to the protestants.

The nonconformists saw through this scheme ; and yet determined to avail themselves of whatever advantages it offered them. Some of the ministers waited on the king to thank him for the indulgence ; and many of them took out licenses and began to preach publicly. Baxter delayed for a while, till the ministers in the city

had opened their respective places of worship, and had gathered their congregations. After that, he consented to take a license, on condition he might have it “without the title of Independent, Presbyterian, or any other party, but only as a nonconformist.” Such a license was obtained for him; and “the 19th of November,” he writes, “my baptism-day, was the first day after ten years silence that I preached in a tolerated public assembly, though not yet tolerated in any consecrated church, but only against law in my own house.” In January, he began a week-day lecture in the chapel of a brother minister. On the Lord’s days, he had no congregation of his own, but preached occasionally and gratuitously where he was invited. The next spring he removed his family into the city, having resided at Totteridge three years.

But the progress of the court towards arbitrary power, had roused something of the English spirit even in that degenerate age. When the parliament assembled, corrupt and venal as it was, the declaration of indulgence was voted illegal, and after much debating and resistance on the part of the administration, was finally given up by the king. The dissenters themselves were known to be against the declaration. One of the representatives of the city of London, speaking in the name of the nonconformists, declared that they would rather not have their liberty than have it at the expense of the constitution. The overthrow of the declaration was followed by the Test act, which though leveled against the designs of the court and the catholics, bore hard on the interests of protestant dissenters. Yet this act, the dissenters, in their zeal against the common enemy, heartily promoted; trusting that the parliament would immediately honor their integrity, and relieve their burthens. A bill for their relief was brought into the house of Commons; but was defeated by the united management of the court and the bishops.

The court seeing that the Puritans were not to be enticed into a conspiracy against the constitution, now let loose upon them the whole pack of informers, and determined to make them feel the weight of the law. A number of infamous persons in London and elsewhere followed the trade of informers, and shared with justices of the same stamp, the fines imposed on dissenters for the exercise

of their worship. By such informers and magistrates, Baxter was persecuted above most of his brethren. Prosecution was heaped on prosecution ; but he escaped imprisonment, and while he was permitted to go at large he was resolved to pursue his work of preaching. At last, he says, " I was so long wearied with keeping my doors shut against them that came to distrain on my goods for preaching, that I was fain to go from my house, and to sell all my goods, and to hide my library first, and afterwards to sell it ; so that if books had been my treasure (and I valued little more on earth,) I had now been without a treasure. For about twelve years, I was driven a hundred miles from them ; and when I had paid dear for the carriage, after two or three years, I was forced to sell them. The prelates, to hinder me from preaching, deprived me also of these private comforts ; but God saw that they were my snare. We brought nothing into this world, and we must carry nothing out. The loss is very tolerable."

In this way he lived for several years, driven from one refuge to another, having no certain dwelling place, and yet preaching with the boldness and perseverance of a martyr. Once with the aid of his friends, he built a chapel. But after preaching there a single sermon, he was obliged to flee into the country to escape imprisonment. When he attempted to occupy it again, the meeting was repeatedly broken up by the king's drums beaten under the windows. In the end, he was glad to dispose of it at a great pecuniary sacrifice, that it might become a chapel of ease to the parish within which it was built. All this while he was "in deaths oft," groaning under almost incredible anguish as his complicated diseases gained on his declining strength : and yet so intense and indefatigable was the energy of his mind, he was producing volume after volume, as rapidly as if he had been a man of perfect health and unbroken literary leisure.

In 1678, the jealousy and alarm in respect to popery which had long been rising, and for which the proceedings of the Court and of the Catholics had given abundant cause, broke out into a sudden and irresistible panic. The whole nation was thrown into a ferment by the alleged discovery of a "popish plot," the purpose of which was said to be to murder the king, to put the duke of

York on the throne, and to suppress the protestant heresy by fire and sword. That the papists were at that time extensively consulting and plotting for the restoration of their religion in Great Britain, and were hoping great things from the expected succession of the duke of York, who was one of them, is unquestionable. That the discoveries of Oates and others, by which the nation was thrown into so terrible a panic, were false, is equally beyond dispute. But such was the excitement of all sorts of people, that many papists of distinction, priests and laymen, were put to death under the forms of law for a supposed participation in the "bloody and hellish plot." In connection with this excitement, a desperate effort was made in parliament to secure the liberties and protestant religion of the nation, by excluding the duke of York from his succession to the crown. This emergency united in one phalanx, the more moderate and liberal members of the established church and the protestant dissenters. Several parliaments endeavored the relief of the persecuted protestants; but the bishops in the house of Lords, generally voted against such measures, and the king was willing to have a body of men so uncompromising, still at his mercy. The persecution still went on, with occasional intervals of partial repose, till the death of the king in 1685.

James II. a professed and bigotted papist, succeeded to the throne; and though at first all was tranquility and confidence, as is usual with the English people at the accession of a new sovereign, soon the fears which had formerly agitated the nation began to revive; and it was evident that all those fears were now to be realized. The universities and the great body of the clergy still professed the utmost obsequiousness, and preached, as they had long done, the doctrine of unlimited obedience. Encouraged by such demonstrations of loyalty, James went on the more rapidly and madly with his designs. His court and council were filled with papists; parliaments were dispensed with; laws were set aside by the royal prerogative; and a government in all respects arbitrary, was attempted. The established church was at last invaded. Some important livings in the universities and elsewhere were seized by the king for the popish priests. On such an occasion, nature was too strong for principle; the favorite doctrine of passive

obedience was forgotten ; and the established clergy and the king were arrayed against each other. The king had now no friends but the Catholics ; and the nation was ripe for revolution. Urged by many invitations, the prince of Orange, who had married James' eldest daughter, invaded the kingdom ; and a revolution was effected without a battle and almost without bloodshed, in 1689. James, after an disgraceful reign of four years, abdicated the crown by flight ; and was succeeded by William and Mary.

The concluding part of Baxter's narrative of his own life and times, is mostly occupied with notices of the state of public affairs during the latter years of Charles's reign, and at the accession of James to the throne. The friends and associates of his earlier years were departing in rapid succession to the "everlasting rest." His wife, who had for twenty years cheered him with affectionate and cheerful assiduity under his many afflictions, died on the 14th of June, 1681. Thus left alone in his old age, with infirmities and pains upon him, the recital of which would be distressing, he was still followed by his persecutors. On the 24th of August, 1682, just twenty years after the ejection, he preached in great weakness, and expecting to preach no more, "took his leave of the pulpit and public work in a thankful congregation." "But after this," he says, "when I had ceased preaching, I was suddenly surprised by a poor, violent informer, and many constables and officers, who had rushed in, apprehended me, and served on me one warrant to seize on my person for coming within five miles of a corporation, and five more warrants to distrain for a hundred and ninety pounds for five sermons. They cast my servants into fears, and were about to take all my books and goods, when I contentedly went with them towards the justice to be sent to jail, and left my house to their will. But Dr. Thomas Cox, meeting me, forced me in again to my couch and bed, and went to five justices, and took his oath, without my knowledge, that I could not go to prison without danger of death. On that the justices delayed a day, till they could speak with the king, and told him what the doctor had sworn : so the king consented that, for the present, imprisonment should be forborne, that I might die at home. But they executed all their warrants on my books and goods, even the bed that I lay sick on,

and sold them all. Some friends paid them as much money as they were prized at, which I repaid, and was fain to send them away."

"The separation from my books would have been a greater part of my small affliction, but that I found I was near the end both of that work and that life which needeth books, and so I easily let go all. Naked came I into the world, and naked must I go out. But I never wanted less what man can give, than when men had taken all. My old friends, and strangers, were so liberal, that I was fain to restrain their bounty. Their kindness was a surer and larger revenue to me than my own. But God was pleased quickly to put me past all fear of men, and all desire of avoiding suffering from them by concealment, by laying on me more himself than man can do. Then imprisonment, with tolerable health, would have seemed a palace to me; and had they put me to death for such a duty as they persecute me for, it would have been a joyful end of my calamity: but day and night I groan and languish under God's just afflicting hand. The pain which before only tired my reins, and tore my bowels, now also fell upon my bladder, and scarce any part, or hour, is free. As waves follow waves in the tempestuous seas, so one pain followeth another in this sinful, miserable flesh. I die daily, and yet remain alive. God, in his great mercy, knowing my dullness in health and ease, doth make it much easier to repent and hate my sin, loathe myself, condemn the world, and submit to the sentence of death with willingness, than otherwise it was ever likely to have been. O, how little is it that wrathful enemies can do against us, in comparison of what our sin and the justice of God can do! and, O, how little is it that the best and kindest of friends can do for a pained body, or a guilty, sinful soul, in comparison of one gracious look or word from God! Wo be to him that hath no better help than man: and blessed is he whose help and hope are in the Lord!"

In 1684, he was again apprehended. Expecting to be imprisoned for residing in London, he refused to open his chamber door, the officers having no warrant to enter by violence; but six officers besieged his study, watching all night, and keeping him from his bed and food, till on the second day he surrendered, and scarcely able to stand, was carried to the sessions and "bound in four hun-

dred pounds bond to his good behavior." He desired to know what his crime was ; and was told that he was thus dealt with only to secure the government in evil times, and "that they had a list of many suspected persons whom they must do the like with." The same process was repeated thrice in the course of a few months. On one of these occasions, Dec. 11th, he was told that the main object was to restrain him from writing.

On the 28th of February following, a few days after the accession of James, he was committed to prison by a warrant from the infamous Chief Justice Jefferies, for his Paraphrase on the New Testament, then just published, which was denominated a scandalous and seditious book against the government. On the 18th of May, his counsel, on account of his illness, moved that his trial might be postponed. "I will not give him a minute's time more, to save his life," was the answer of the Chief Justice. On the 30th he came to his trial in Guildhall. Eminent counsel had been employed in his behalf by his friends. But the arbitrary and brutal Chief Justice would allow no argument to be made in his defense. One after another of those who attempted to speak, was interrupted and overborne by the violence of the bench. The coarsest and most rabid abuse was heaped on the prisoner. At last, Baxter himself offered to speak. "My lord," said he, "I think I can clearly answer all that is laid to my charge, and I shall do it briefly. The sum is contained in these few papers, to which I shall add a little by testimony." But not a word would the judge hear ; and the witnesses who had been cited in behalf of the prisoner, were prevented from testifying. At length Jefferies summed up the cause, in the same style in which he had conducted it. "Does your lordship think," said Baxter, "that any jury will pretend to pass a verdict upon me, on such a trial?" "I'll warrant you, Mr. Baxter," was the reply, "don't trouble yourself about that." The jury immediately laid their heads together, and found him guilty. He was fined five hundred marks, condemned to lie in prison till he paid it, and bound to his good behavior for seven years.*

* An account of this trial is given in Calamy's life of Baxter, and is copied, with some authentic additions, by Orme. Baxter's own narrative terminates just before the date of his arrest.

Nearly two years afterwards, James, having found that the established clergy would not stand by their favorite doctrine of obedience, undertook once more to court the dissenters. Many who were imprisoned were set at liberty. Among these was Baxter. His fine was remitted ; but he was still under bonds for his good behavior, it being expressly stipulated that he might continue to reside in London. He was released November 24, 1686.

Soon afterwards the king, pursuing his mad project, published a declaration, stronger than that on which Charles had ventured in 1672, offering the most unlimited religious liberty, and suspending all the laws against any sort of dissenters. Some of the ministers united in addresses of thanks for this liberty, but Baxter and many of his brethren stood aloof, lest they should seem to approve so manifest an usurpation. None however scrupled to enjoy the liberty while it lasted. Baxter, though in his seventy second year, resumed once more his public labors, assisting his friend Mr. Sylvester, in the charge of a congregation. Four years and a half, he preached once every Lord's day, and once on every other Thursday. After his growing diseases had disabled him from preaching, he was wont to open his doors every morning and evening, for all that would worship with him in his family. He continued to write and publish after all his other labors were at an end.

And here the catalogue of his publications may be brought down from the year 1665* to the end.

53. "The Reasons of the Christian Religion. The first part, of godliness ; proving by natural evidence the being of God, the necessity of holiness, and a future life of retribution, &c. The second part, of Christianity ; proving by evidence, supernatural and natural, the certain truth of the Christian belief, and answering the objections of unbelievers." 4to. published in 1667. This is a systematic and elaborate work of six hundred pages.

54. "Directions for weak distempered Christians, to grow up to a confirmed state of grace ; with Motives opening the lamentable effects of their weaknesses and distempers." 8vo. 1668.

* See pp. 217, 220.

55. "The character of a sound Confirmed Christian ; as also of a weak Christian, and of a seeming Christian." 8vo. published in 1669.

56. "The Life of Faith ; in three parts." 4to. published in 1670. The first part of this work, is his sermon formerly preached before the king, with large additions. The other two parts are instructions and directions on the same subject. The whole is a volume of more than five hundred pages.

57. "The Cure of Church Divisions." 8vo. published in 1671.

58. "Defense of the principles of love which are necessary to the unity and concord of Christians, and are delivered in a book called The Cure of Church Divisions. By Richard Baxter, one of the mourners for a self-dividing and self-afflicting land." 8vo. published in 1671. The Cure of Church Divisions, was thought by many nonconformists to reflect unjustly on them and their cause ; and on that account it was severely handled by some of them, and particularly by Edward Bagshaw, an Independent, of a warm and hasty spirit. To his 'Antidote', Baxter replied in this 'Defense.'

59. "The Divine appointment of the Lord's Day, proved, as a separated day for holy worship, especially in Church-Assemblies : and consequently the cessation of the seventh-day Sabbath." 8vo. published in 1671.

60. "The Duty of Heavenly Meditation reviewed, in answer to the Exceptions of Mr. Giles Firmin." 4to. 1671. This pamphlet was a reply to a brother who had animadverted gently on some passages in the Saint's Rest.

61. "How far Holiness is the design of Christianity," 4to. a pamphlet, published in 1671.

62. "God's goodness vindicated," &c. 12mo. 1671.

63. "A second Admonition to Mr. Edward Bagshaw, written to call him to repentance, &c." 4to. published in 1671.

64. "More Reasons for the Christian Religion and no Reasons against it." 12mo. published in 1672. This was an Appendix to the work numbered 53.

65. "The Church told of Mr. Edward Bagshaw's Scandal, and warned of the dangerous snares of Satan now laid for them in his love-killing principles." 4to. published in 1672. This was the

end of the controversy. Bagshaw, long a sufferer in the cause of righteousness and liberty, whom his opponent characterizes as a man of a Roman spirit, died, a prisoner, just as this pamphlet came from the press ;—a circumstance which Baxter records as one that gave him great pain.

66. “A Christian Directory ; or, A Sum of Practical Theology, and Cases of Conscience,” etc. folio, 1673. This work was written in 1664 and 1665. In the recent octavo edition, it fills five large volumes.

67. “The poor man’s Family Book.” 8vo. published in 1674.

68. “Catholic Theology—plain, pure, peaceable : for pacification of the dogmatical word-warriors ; who, by contending about things unrevealed, or not understood, and by putting verbal differences for real, and their arbitrary notions for necessary sacred truths, deceived and deceiving by ambiguous, unexplained words, have long been the shame of the Christian religion, a scandal and hardening to unbelievers, the incendiaries, dividers, and distracters of the church ; the occasion of state discords and wars ; the corrupters of the Christian faith, and the subverters of their own souls, and those of their followers ; calling them to a blind zeal and wrathful warfare against true piety, love, and peace, and teaching them to censure, backbite, slander, and prate against each other, for things which they never understood. In three books. I. Pacifying Principles about God’s decrees, foreknowledge, providence, operations, redemption, grace, man’s power, free will, justification, merits, certainty of salvation, perseverance, &c. II. A Pacifying Praxis, or dialogue about the five articles, justification, &c., proving that men here contend almost only about ambiguous words and unrevealed things. III. Pacifying Disputations against some real errors which hinder reconciliation, viz., about physical pre-determinations, original sin, the extent of redemption, sufficient grace, imputation of righteousness, &c. Written chiefly for posterity, when sad experience hath taught men to hate theological wars, and to love, and seek, and call for peace.” folio. 1675.

69. “More Proofs of Infants’ Church-membership, and consequently their rights to Baptism ; or a second Defense of our Infan

Rights and Mercies," 8vo. published in 1675. This was the revival of his old dispute with Mr. Tombes. See pp. 145. 146.

70. "Two disputations of original Sin." 12mo. 1675.

71. "Treatise of Justifying Righteousness," 8vo. 1676.

72. Omitting, for the present, any mention of a large class of controversial writings which occupied much of his time, we notice next a small tract published in 1676, entitled "Reasons for Ministers' using the greatest plainness," etc.

73. "Review of the state of Christian Infants," 8vo. 1676.

74. "A Moral Prognostication; first, What shall befall the Churches on earth, till their concord by the restitution of their primitive purity, simplicity and charity: secondly, How that restitution is likely to be made, if ever, and what shall befall them thenceforth unto the end, in that golden age of love." 4to. published in 1680. This work was written in 1661.

75. "Poetical Fragments: Heart Employment with God and itself. The concordant discord of a broken healed heart; sorrowing, rejoicing, fearing, hoping, living, dying." 12mo. 1681.

76. "Methodus Theologiæ Christianæ, naturæ rerum congrua, sacræ scripturæ conformis, praxi adaptata," etc. folio, 1681. There could hardly have been a more striking illustration of the versatility of Baxter's talents, than the fact that the same year witnessed the publication of his Methodus Theologiæ, and his Poetical Fragments; the one (nearly 900 pages) full of all the logic, learning, and metaphysics of the schoolmen; the other (as insignificant in bulk as any modern volume of poems) containing some truly beautiful specimens of devotional poetry.

77. "A Breviate of the Life of Mrs. Margaret Baxter, with some account of her mother, Mrs. Hanmer." 4to. 1681.

78. "Of the Immortality of Man's Soul; and of the nature of it, and of other spirits." 12mo. 1682.

79. "Compassionate Counsel to all Young Men; especially London apprentices; students of divinity, physic, and law; and the sons of magistrates and rich men." 12mo. 1682.

80. "The Catechising of Families: A Teacher of Household-ers how to teach their Households," etc. 8vo. published in 1683. This is a large catechism of nearly three hundred pages.

81. "Additions to the Poetical Fragments ; written for himself, and communicated to such as are more for serious verse than smooth." 12mo. published in 1683.

82. "Obedient Patience : its nature in general, and its exercise," etc. 8vo. published in 1683.

83. "Mr. Baxter's Dying Thoughts upon Philippians i. 23," etc. 8vo. published in 1683.

84. "The one Thing Necessary ; or Christ's Justification of Mary's choice," etc. 8vo. 1685.

85. "Paraphrase on the New Testament, with Notes," etc. 4to. 1685. This book—for which the author suffered so much—was designed as a Family Expositor.

86. "Knowledge and Love Compared," etc. 4to. 1689.

87. "Cain and Abel Malignity, that is, Enmity to serious Godliness, that is to a holy and heavenly state of heart and life : lamented, described, detected ; and unanswerably proved to be the devilish nature ; and the militia of the Devil against God, and Christ, and the church and kingdoms ; and the surest sign of a state of damnation." 8vo. 1689.

88. "The Scripture Gospel defended, and Christ, grace, and free justification vindicated against the libertines." 8vo. 1690. This work was occasioned by a new breaking out of the antinomian controversy.

89. "An End of Doctrinal Controversies which have lately troubled the churches, by reconciling explication, without much disputing." 8vo. 1691.

90, 91. In 1691, he published two pamphlets in opposition to some extravagances then broached, by an unfortunate interpreter of the apocalypse.

92. "Of National Churches ; their description, institution," etc. 4to. 1691.

93. "Richard Baxter's Penitent Confession and Necessary Vindication." 4to. 1691.

94. "The Certainty of the World of Spirits, fully evinced by unquestionable histories of apparitions," etc. 12mo. 1691. When such men as Matthew Hale and Robert Boyle were firm believers

of the doctrine contained in this volume, a similar belief can by no means be set down to the prejudice of Baxter's intellect.

95—103. Between 1674, and 1682, he published nine separate sermons, several of them funeral discourses, and few of them inferior to the best productions of any other preacher.

104—111. During the period from 1671 to 1691, he produced eight different works against popery ; some of them, light tracts to instruct and guard the uneducated reader ; and some, elaborate treatises for men of learning.

112—135. His publications in connection with the great controversy between the establishment and the dissenters, from the year 1676 to the end of his life, are also too numerous to be separately mentioned here. Twenty-three different pamphlets and volumes, some of them among his most labored productions, constitute this series. His part in this controversy was altogether his own. On the one hand he attempted to restrain the zeal of his suffering brethren ; and on the other he showed himself more than a match for the most learned and able of their ecclesiastical oppressors.

136—140. This enumeration may be carried still farther, by adding five posthumous volumes, the most considerable of which, entitled "*Reliquiæ Baxterianæ ; Mr. Richard Baxter's Narrative,*" etc. was published in 1696. Another was a metrical "*Paraphrase on the Psalms of David, with other Hymns.*"

We have followed the good man to the end of all his labors. After having seen how he lived, we hardly need to be told how he died ; the death of such a man could not but be peace.

With what temper he approached the final hour may be seen from a letter of his to the venerable Increase Mather of Boston, which though dated about four months before his death, was doubtless among the last productions of his pen. The book referred to, is Cotton Mather's life of Eliot.

"Dear Brother,

"I thought I had been near dying at twelve o'clock in bed : but your book revived me ; I lay reading it until between one and two. I knew much of Mr. Eliot's opinions, by many letters which I had

from him. There was no man on earth whom I honored above him. It is his evangelical work that is the apostolical succession which I plead for. I am now dying I hope as he did. It pleased me to read from him my case. ‘My understanding faileth, my memory faileth, and my hand and pen fail, but my charity faileth not.’ That word much comforted me. I am as zealous a lover of the New England Churches as any man, according to Mr. Noyes’, Mr. Norton’s and Mr. Mitchel’s, and the Synod’s model. I love your father upon the letters I received from him. I love *you* better for your learning, labors, and peaceable moderation. I love *your son* better than either of you, for the excellent temper that appeareth in his writings. O that godliness and wisdom may *increase* in all families. He hath honored himself half as much as Mr. Eliot ; I say half as much, for deeds excel words. God preserve you and New England. Pray for your fainting languishing friend,

RI. BAXTER.”

“Aug. 3, 1691.”

The sermon at Baxter’s funeral, was preached, as he had himself requested, by his old and tried friend, Dr. Bates. Another sermon on the same occasion was preached to the congregation to which he had last ministered, by his associate in the ministry, Sylvester. From these sermons the following particulars are selected.

“He continued to preach so long,” says Bates, “notwithstanding his wasted, languishing body, that the last time he almost died in the pulpit. It would have been his joy to have been transfigured in the mount. Not long after, he felt the approaches of death, and was confined to his sick bed. Death reveals the secrets of the heart ; then words are spoken with most feeling and less affectation. This excellent saint was the same in his life and death ; his last hours were spent in preparing others and himself to appear before God. He said to his friends that visited him, ‘You come hither to learn to die ; I am not the only person that must go this way. I can assure you that your whole life, be it ever so long, is little enough to prepare for death. Have a care of this vain, deceitful world, and the lusts of the flesh ; be sure you choose God for your portion, heaven for your home, God’s glory for your end, his word for your rule, and then you need never fear but we shall meet with comfort.’

“Never was penitent sinner more humble and debasing himself, never was a sincere believer more calm and comfortable.” “Many times he prayed, ‘God be merciful to me a sinner,’ and blessed God that this was left upon record in the gospel as an effectual prayer. He said, ‘God may justly condemn me for the best duty I ever did; and all my hopes are from the free mercy of God in Christ,’ which he often prayed for.”

“His resigned submission to the will of God in his sharp sickness was eminent. When extremity of pain constrained him earnestly to pray to God for his release by death, he would check himself, “It is not fit for me to prescribe—when thou wilt, what thou wilt, how thou wilt.’

“Being in great anguish, he said, ‘O! how unsearchable are his ways, and his paths past finding out; the reaches of his providence we cannot fathom!’ And to his friends, ‘Do not think the worse of religion for what you see me suffer.’

“Being often asked by his friends, how it was with his inward man, he replied, ‘I bless God I have a well-grounded assurance of my eternal happiness, and great peace and comfort within.’ But it was his trouble he could not triumphantly express it, by reason of his extreme pains. He said, ‘Flesh must perish, and we must feel the perishing of it; and that though his judgment submitted, yet sense would still make him groan.’

“Being asked by a person of quality, whether he had not great joy from his believing apprehensions of the invisible state, he replied, ‘What else, think you, Christianity serves for?’ He said, the consideration of the Deity in his glory and greatness, was too high for our thoughts; but the consideration of the Son of God in our nature, and of the saints in heaven whom we knew and loved, did much sweeten and familiarize heaven to him. The description of heaven, in Heb. xii. 22, was most comfortable to him; “that he was going to the innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven; and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel.’ That scripture, he said, ‘deserved a thousand

thousand thoughts." He said, 'Oh, how comfortable is that promise; Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, the things God hath laid up for those who love him.'

"At another time, he said, that he found great comfort and sweetness in repeating the Lord's Prayer, and was sorry some good people were prejudiced against the use of it, for there were all necessary petitions for soul and body contained in it.

"At other times, he gave excellent counsel to young ministers that visited him; and earnestly prayed to God to bless their labors, and make them very successful in converting many souls to Christ; and expressed great joy in the hopes that God would do a great deal of good by them; and that they were of moderate, peaceful spirits.

"He did often pray that God would be merciful to this miserable, distracted world, and that he would preserve his church and interest in it. He advised his friends to beware of self-conceitedness, as a sin that was likely to ruin this nation; and said, 'I have written a book against it, which I am afraid has done little good.'

"Being asked, whether he had altered his mind in controversial points, he said, 'Those that please, may know my mind in my writings; and that what he had done, was not for his own reputation, but for the glory of God.'

"I went to him, with a very worthy friend, Mr. Mather, of New England, the day before he died; and speaking some comforting words to him, he replied, 'I have pain; there is no arguing against sense, but I have peace, I have peace.' I told him, 'You are now approaching to your long-desired home;' he answered, 'I believe, I believe.' He said to Mr. Mather, 'I bless God that you have accomplished your business; the Lord prolong your life.'

"He expressed a great willingness to die; and during his sickness, when the question was asked, 'How he did?' his reply was, '*Almost well.*' His joy was most remarkable, when, in his own apprehensions, death was nearest; and his spiritual joy was at length consummate in eternal joy."*

* Baxter's Works, Vol. iv. pp. 337, 340.

“While pain and sickness wasted his body,” says Sylvester, “his soul abode rational, strong in faith and hope, arguing itself into, and preserving itself in that patience, hope and joy through grace, which gave him great support, and kept out doubts and fears concerning his eternal welfare.”

“Even to the last, I never could perceive his peace and heavenly hopes assaulted or disturbed. I have often heard him greatly lament that he felt no greater liveliness in what appeared so great and clear to him, and so very much desired by him. As to the influence thereof upon his spirit, in order to the sensible refreshments of it, he clearly saw what ground he had to rejoice in God; he doubted not of his right to heaven. He told me he knew it should be well with him when he was gone. He wondered to hear others speak of their sensible, passionately strong desires to die, and of their transports of spirit, when sensible of their approaching death; whereas he himself thought he knew as much as they, and had as rational satisfaction as they could have that his soul was safe, and yet could never feel their sensible consolations. I asked him, whether much of this was not to be resolved into bodily constitution; he told me he thought it might be so.”

“On Monday, Dec. 7, about five in the evening, death sent his harbinger to summon him away. A great trembling and coldness extorted strong cries from him, for pity and redress from heaven; which cries and agonies continued for some time, till at length he ceased and lay in an observant, patient expectation of his change. Being once asked, by his faithful friend, and constant attendant in his weakness, Mrs. Bushel, his house-keeper, whether he knew her or not, requesting some sign of it if he did, he softly cried, ‘Death, death!’ He now felt the benefit of his former preparations for the trying time. The last words that he spake to me, on being informed that I was come to see him, were, ‘Oh I thank him, I thank him,’ and turning his eye to me, he said, ‘The Lord teach you how to die.’”

“He expired on Tuesday morning, about four o’clock, Dec. 8, 1691. Though he expected and desired his dissolution to have been on the Lord’s-day before, which with joy to me, he called a *high day*, because of his desired change expected then by him.”

Sylvester thus describes the person and manners of his venerable friend. "He was tall and slender, and stooped much. His countenance was composed and grave, somewhat inclining to smile. He had a piercing eye, a very articulate speech, and his deportment was rather plain than complimentary. He had a great command over his thoughts, and had that happy faculty, according to the character which was given of him by a learned man dissenting from him, that 'he could say what he would, and he could prove what he said.' He was pleasingly conversible, save in his studying hours, wherein he could not bear with trivial disturbances. He was sparingly facetious, but never light or frothy. He was unmoveable where apprehensive of his duty ; yet affable and condescending where there was a likelihood of doing good. His personal abstinence, severities, and labors, were exceeding great. He kept his body under, and always feared pampering his flesh too much."

"His prayers," says Bates, "were an effusion of the most lively melting expressions, and his intimate ardent affections to God ; from the 'abundance of the heart his lips spake.' His soul took wing for heaven, and rapt up the souls of others with him. Never did I see or hear a holy minister address himself to God with more reverence and humility, with respect to his glorious greatness ; never with more zeal and fervency correspondent to the infinite moment of his requests ; nor with more filial affiance in the divine mercy.

"In his sermons there was a rare union of arguments and motives to convince the mind and gain the heart : all the fountains of reason and persuasion were open to his discerning eye. There was no resisting the force of his discourses without denying reason and divine revelation. He had a marvellous felicity and copiousness in speaking. There was a noble negligence in his style : for his great mind could not stoop to the affected eloquence of words : he despised flashy oratory : but his expressions were clear and powerful, so convincing the understanding, so entering into the soul, so engaging the affections, that those were as deaf as adders, who were not 'charmed by so wise a charmer.' He was animated with the Holy Spirit, and breathed celestial fire, to inspire heat and life into dead sinners, and to melt the obdurate in the frozen tombs. Methinks I still hear him speak those powerful words : 'A wretch that

is condemned to die to-morrow cannot forget it : and yet poor sinners, that continually are uncertain to live an hour, and certain speedily to see the majesty of the Lord to their inconceivable joy or terror, as sure as they now live on earth, can forget these things for which they have their memory : and which one would think shou'd drown the matters of this world, as the report of a cannon does a whisper, or as the sun obscures the poorest glow-worm. O wonderful folly and distractedness of the ungodly ! That ever men can forget, I say again, that they can forget, eternal joy, eternal woe, and the eternal God, and the place of their eternal unchangeable abodes, when they stand even at the door ; and there is but a thin veil of flesh between them and that amazing sight, that eternal gulf, and they are daily dying and stepping in.' ”

“ Though all divine graces, the ‘ fruit of the Spirit,’ were visible in his conversation, yet some were more eminent. Humility is to other graces, as the morning-star is to the sun, that goes before it, and follows it in the evening : humility prepares us for the receiving of grace, “ God gives grace to the humble : ” and it follows the exercise of grace ; “ Not I,” says the apostle, “ but the grace of God in me.” In Mr. Baxter, there was a rare union of sublime knowledge, and other spiritual excellencies, with the lowest opinion of himself.”

“ Self-denial and contempt of the world were shining graces in him. I never knew any person less indulgent to himself, and more indifferent to his temporal interest. The offer of a bishopric was no temptation to him ; for his exalted soul despised the pleasures and profits which others so earnestly desire ; he valued not an empty title upon his tomb.”

“ This saint was tried by many afflictions. We are very tender of our reputation : his name was obscured under a cloud of detraction. Many slanderous darts were thrown at him. He was charged with schism and sedition. He was accused for his paraphrase upon the New Testament, as guilty of disloyal aspersions upon the government, and condemned, unheard, to a prison, where he remained for some years. But he was so far from being moved at the unrighteous prosecution, that he joyfully said to a constant friend, ‘ What could I desire more of God, than after serving him to my power, I should now be called to suffer for him.’ ”

“But his patience was more eminently tried by his continual pains and languishing. Martyrdom is a more easy way of dying, when the combat and the victory are finished at once, than to die by degrees every day. His complaints were frequent, but who ever heard an unsubmitive word drop from his lips? He was not put out of his patience, nor out of the possession of himself. In his sharp pains, he said, ‘I have a rational patience, and a believing patience, though sense would recoil.’

“His pacific spirit was a clear character of his being a child of God. How ardently he endeavored to cement the breaches among us, which others widen and keep open, is publicly known. He said to a friend, ‘I can as willingly be a martyr for love, as for any article of the creed.’ It is strange to astonishment, that those who agree in the substantial and great points of the reformed religion, and are of differing sentiments only in things not so clear, nor of that moment as those wherein they consent, should still be opposite parties.”

“Love to the souls of men was the peculiar character of Mr. Baxter’s spirit. In this he imitated and honored our Savior, who prayed, died, and lives for the salvation of souls. All his natural and supernatural endowments were subservient to this blessed end. It was his ‘meat and drink,’ the life and joy of his life to do good to souls. In his usual conversation, his serious, frequent and delightful discourse was of divine things, to inflame his friends with the love of heaven. He received with tender compassion and condescending kindness, the meanest that came to him for counsel and consolation. He gave in one year a hundred pounds to buy bibles for the poor. He has in his will disposed of all that remains of his estate after the legacies to his kindred, for the benefit of the souls and bodies of the poor.”

Who will not join in the prayer with which Bates concludes his sermon? “May I live the short remainder of my life, as entirely to the glory of God, as he lived; and when I shall come to the period of my life, may I die in the same blessed peace wherein he died; may I be with him in the kingdom of light and love for ever.”

THE
RIGHT METHOD
FOR
A SETTLED PEACE OF CONSCIENCE,
AND
SPIRITUAL COMFORT.

IN THIRTY-TWO DIRECTIONS.

"God is love."

1 JOHN iv. 16.

"Come, for all things are now ready." LUKE xiv. 17. MAT. xxii. 4.

"Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

MAT. xi. 28.

"For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

GAL. v. 17.

"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"

ROM. vi. 16.

"Whoso will love his life, shall lose it : but whoso will deny himself, shall save it."

ROM. xiii. 14.

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die : but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

ROM. viii. 13.

"While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption : for which things they are devoted to, to bring in bondage."

2 PET. ii. 19.

"Thus ye speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

EZEK. xxxiii. 10, 11.

"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

2 COR. v. 20.

"Trust in the Lord, and do good, &c. Delight thyself also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

PS. xxxvii. 3, 4.

Sound doctrine makes a sound judgment, a sound heart, a sound conversion, and a sound conscience.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To my much valued, beloved, and honored Friends, Colonel JOHN BRIDGES, with Mrs. MARGARET BRIDGES, his wife, and Mr. THOMAS FOLEY, with Mrs. ANNE FOLEY, his wife.

THOUGH in publishing our writings, we intend them for the good of all : yet custom, not without reason, doth teach us, sometimes to direct them more especially to some. Though one only had the original interest in these papers, yet do I now direct them to you all, as not knowing how in this to separate you. You dwell together in my estimation and affection : one of you a member of the church which I must teach, and legally the patron of its maintenance and minister : the other, a special branch of that family which I was first indebted to in this county. You lately joined in presenting to the parliament, the petition of this county for the Gospel and a faithful ministry. When I only told you of my intention, of sending some poor scholars to the university, you freely and jointly offered your considerable annual allowance thereto, and that for the continuance of my life, or their necessities there. I will tell the world of this, whether you will or no ; not for your applause, but for their imitation ; and the shame of many of far greater estates, that will not be drawn to do the like. The season somewhat aggravates the goodness of your works. When satan hath a design to burn up those nurseries, you are watering God's plants ; when the greedy mouth of sacrilege is gaping for their maintenance, you are voluntarily adding for the supply of its de-

fect. Who knows how many souls they may win to Christ (if God shall send them forth into his harvest) whom you have thus assisted? And what an addition to your comfort this may be? When the Gospel is so undermined, and the ministry so maligned, and their maintenance so envied, you have, as the mouth of this county, appeared for them all. What God will yet do with us, we cannot tell; but if he will continue his Gospel to us, you may have the greater comfort in it. If he will remove it, and forsake a proud, unworthy, false-hearted people, yet may you have the comfort of your sincere endeavors; you (with the rest that sincerely furthered it) may escape the gnawings of conscience, and the public curse and reproach which the history of this age may fasten upon them, who after all their engagements in blood and covenants, would either in ignorant fury, or malicious subtlety, or base temporizing cowardice, oppugn or undermine the Gospel, or in perfidious silence look on whilst it is destroyed. But because it is not the work of a flatterer that I am doing, but of a friend, I must second these commendations with some caution and counsel, and tell yourselves of your danger and duty, as I tell others of your exemplary deeds. Truly, the sad experiences of these times, have much abased my confidence in man, and caused me to have lower thoughts of the best than sometime I have had. I confess I look on man, as such a distempered, slippery and inconstant thing, and of such a natural mutability of apprehensions and affections, that as I shall never more call any man on earth my friend, but with a supposition that he may possibly become mine enemy; so I shall never be so confident of any man's fidelity to Christ, as not withal to suspect that he may possibly forsake him. Nor shall I boast of any man's service for the Gospel, but with a jealousy that he may be drawn to do as much against it (though God, who knows the heart, and knows his own decrees, may know his sincerity, and foreknow his perseverance.) Let me therefore remember you, that had you expended your whole estates, and the blood of your hearts for Christ and his Gospel, he will not take himself beholden to you. He oweth you no thanks for your deepest engagements, highest adventures, greatest cost, or utmost endeavors. You are sure beforehand that you shall be no losers by him: your seeming hazards

increase your security : your losses are your gain : your giving is your receiving : your expenses are your revenues : Christ returns the largest usury. The more you do and suffer for him, the more you are beholden to him. I must also remember you, that you may possibly live to see the day, when it will cost you dearer to shew yourselves faithful to the Gospel, ordinances and ministers of Christ, than now it doth ; and that many have shrunk in greater trials, that past through lesser with resolution and honor. Your defection at the last, would be the loss of all your works and hopes. If any man draw back, Christ saith, his soul shall have no pleasure in him. Even those that have endured the great fight of affliction, being reproached and made a gazing stock, and that having taken joyfully the spoiling of their goods, in assurance of a better and enduring substance, have yet need to be warned that they cast not away their confidence, and draw not back to perdition, and lose not the reward for want of patience and perseverance ; Heb. x. 32. to the end. That you may escape this danger and be happy forever, take this advice. 1. Look carefully to the sincerity of your hearts, in the covenant-closure with Christ. See that you take him with the happiness he hath promised for your all. Take heed of looking after another felicity ; or cherishing other hopes ; or esteeming too highly any thing below. Be jealous, and very jealous, lest your hearts should close deceitfully with Christ, maintaining any secret reserve for your bodily safety ; either resolving not to follow him, or not resolving to follow him through the most desolate distressed condition that he shall lead you in. Count what it may cost you to get the crown ; study well his precepts of mortification and self-denial. There is no true hopes of the glory to come, if you cannot cast over-board all worldly hopes, when the storm is such that you must hazard the one. O how many have thought that Christ was most dear to them, and that the hopes of heaven were their chiefest hopes, who have left Christ, though with sorrow, when he bid them let go all ? 2. Every day renew your apprehensions of the truth and worth of the promised felicity, and of the delusory vanity of all things here below : let not heaven lose with you its attractive force, through your forgetfulness or unbelief. He is the best Christian that knows best why he is a Chris-

tion, and he will most faithfully seek and suffer, that best knows for what he doth it. Value not wealth and honor above that rate, which the wisest and best experienced have put upon them, and allow them no more of your affections than they deserve. A mean wit may easily discover their emptiness. Look on all present actions and conditions with a remembrance of their end. Desire not to share in their prosperity, who must pay as dear for it, as the loss of their souls. Be not ambitious of that honor which must end in confusion: nor of the favor of those that God will call requies. How speedily will they come down, and be levelled with the dust, and be laid in the chains of darkness, that now seem so happy to the polluted world, that cannot see the things to come? Fear not that man must shortly tremble before that God whom all must fear. Be more solicitous for the securing of your consciences and salvation, than of your honors or estates: in every thing that you are put upon, consult first with God and conscience, and not with flesh and blood. It is your daily and most serious care and watchfulness that is requisite to maintain your integrity, and not a few careless thoughts or purposes, conjunct with a minding of earthly things. 4. Deal faithfully with every truth which you receive. Take heed of subjecting it to carnal interests: if once you have affections that can master your understandings, you are lost, and know it not. For when you have a resolution to cast off any duty, you will first believe it is no duty: and when you must change your judgment for carnal advantages, you will make the change seem reasonable and right: and evil shall be proved good when you have a mind to follow it. 5. Make Gospel-truths your own, by daily humble studies, arising to such a soundness of judgment, that you may not need to take too much upon trust, lest if your guides should miscarry, you miscarry with them. Deliver not up your understanding in captivity to any. 6. Yet do not over-value your own understandings. This pride hath done that in church and state, which all discerning men are lamenting. They that know but little, see not what they want, as well as what they have; nor that imperfection in their knowledge, which should humble them, nor that difficulty in things which should make them diligent and modest. 7. Apprehend the necessity and usefulness of Christ's offi-

cers, order, and ordinances, for the prosperity of his church : pastors must guide you, though not seduce you, or lead you blindfold. But choose (if you may) such as are judicious and not ignorant, not rash but sober, not formal, but serious and spiritual ; not of carnal, but heavenly conversations : especially avoid them that divide and follow parties, and seek to draw disciples to themselves, and can sacrifice the church's unity and peace to their proud humors or carnal interests. Watch carefully that no weaknesses of the minister, do draw you to a disesteem of the ordinances of God ; nor any of the sad miscarriages of professors, should cause you to set less by truth or godliness. Wrong not Christ more, because other men have so wronged him. Quarrel more with your own unfitness and unworthiness in ordinances, than with other men's. It is the frame of your own heart that doth more to help or hinder your comforts, than the quality of those you join with. To these few directions, added to the rest in this book, I shall subjoin my hearty prayers, that you may receive from that Gospel, and ministry which you have owned, such stability in the faith, such victory over the flesh and the world, such apprehensions of the love of God in Christ, such direction in every strait and duty, that you may live uprightly, and die peaceably, and reign gloriously. Amen.

Your servant in the faith

and Gospel of Christ,

RICHARD BAXTER.

May 9, 1653.

do reach his own. He takes it unkindly, that you are so suspicious of him, and that all that he hath done for you in the work of redemption, and all the gracious workings of his Spirit on your souls, and all your own peculiar experiences of his goodness, can raise you to no higher apprehensions of his love! Shall not love be acknowledged to be love, when it is grown to a miracle? When it surpasseth comprehension! Must the Lord set up love and mercy in the work of redemption, to be equally admired with his omnipotency manifested in the creation? And call forth the world to this sweet employment, that in secret and in public it might be the business of our lives? And yet shall it be so overlooked or questioned, as if you lived without love and mercy in the world? Providence doth its part, by heaping up mountains of daily mercies; and these it sets before your eyes. The gospel hath eminently done its part by clearly describing them, and fully assuring them, and this is proclaimed frequently in your ears. And yet is there so little in your hearts and mouths? Do you see, and hear, and feel and taste mercy and love? Do you live wholly on it? And yet do you still doubt of it? and think so meanly of it, and so hardly acknowledge it? God takes not this well; but yet he considereth your frailty, and takes you not at the worst. He knows that flesh will play its part, and the remnants of corruption will not be idle. And the serpent will be suggesting false thoughts of God, will be still striving most to obscure that part of his glory which is dearest to him, and especially which is most conjoined with the happiness of man. He knows also, that sin will breed sorrows and fears; and that man's understanding is shallow, and all his conceptions of God are exceeding low. And that we are so far from God as creatures, and so much further as sinners, and especially as conscious of the abuse of his grace, that there must needs follow such a strangeness as will damp and dull our apprehensions of his love; and such an abatement of our confidence, as will make us draw back, and look at God afar off. Seeing therefore that at this distance no full apprehensions of love can be expected, it is the pleasure of our Redeemer shortly to return, with ten thousand of his saints, with the noble army of his martyrs, and the attendance of his angels, and to give you such a convincing demon-

stration of his love, as shall leave no room for one more doubt. Your comforts are now but a taste, they shall be then a feast. They are now but intermittent, they shall be then continual. How soon now do your conquered fears return; and what an inconstancy and unevenness is there in our peace. But then our peace must needs be perfect and permanent, when we shall please God, and enjoy him in perfection to perpetuity. Certainly, christians, your comforts should be now more abundant, but that they are not ripe. It is that, and not this, that is your harvest. I have told you in another book, the mistake and danger of expecting too much here, and the necessity of looking and longing for that rest, if we will have peace indeed! But, alas, how hard is this lesson learned! Unbelievers would have happiness, but how fain would they have it in the creature rather than in God! Believers would rather have their happiness in God than in the creature, but how fain would they have it without dying! And no wonder, for when she brought in death, even grace itself cannot love it, though it may submit to it. But though churlish death do stand in our way, why look we not at the souls, admittance into rest, and the body's resurrection that must shortly follow? Doubtless that faith by which we are justified and saved, as it sits down on the word of truth as the present ground of its confident repose, so doth it thence look with one eye backward on the cross, and the other forward on the crown. And if we well observe the scripture descriptions of that faith, we shall find them as frequently magnifying it, and describing it, from the latter, as from the former. As it is the duty and glory of faith to look back with thankful acknowledgment to a crucified Christ, and his payment of our ransom, so it is the duty and glory of that same justifying faith to look forward with desire and hope to the return of king Jesus, and the glorious celebration of the marriage of the Lamb, and the sentential justification and the glorification of his saints. To believe these things unfeignedly which we never saw, nor ever spoke with man that did see, and to hope for them so really as to let go all present forbidden pleasures, and all worldly hopes and seeming happiness, rather than to hazard the loss of them; this is an eminent part of that faith by which the just do live, and which the scriptures do own as justifying and saving. For it never

distinguishes between justifying faith, as to their nature. It is therefore a great mistake of some to look only at that one eye of justifying faith which looks back upon the cross, and a great mistake of them on the other hand that look only at that eye of it which beholds the crown. Both Christ crucified, and Christ interceding, and Christ returning to justify and glorify, are the objects even of justifying, saving faith, most strictly so called. The scripture oft expresseth the one only, but then it still implieth the other. The Socinians erroneously therefore from Heb. xi. where the examples and eulogies of faith are set forth, do exclude Christ crucified, or the respect to his satisfaction, from justifying faith, and place it in a mere expectation of glory. And others do as ungroundedly affirm, that it is not the justifying act of faith which Heb. xi. describeth, because they find not the cross of Christ there mentioned. For as believing in Christ's blood comprehendeth the end, even the expectation of remission and glory merited by that blood, so the believing of that glory doth always imply that we believe and expect it as the fruit of Christ's ransom. It is for health and life that we accept and trust upon our physcian. And it is for justification and salvation that we accept and trust on Christ. The salvation of our souls is the end of our faith. They that question whether we may believe and obey for our own salvation, do question whether we may go to the physician and follow his advice for health and life. Why then do you that are believers so much forget the end of your faith, and that for which it is that you believe? Believing in Christ for present mercies only, be they temporal or spiritual, is not the true believing. They are dangerously mistaken that think the thoughts of heaven to be so accidental to the nature and work of faith, as that they tend only to our comfort, and are not necessary to salvation itself. It is upon your apprehensions and expectations of that unseen felicity that both your peace and safety do depend. How contrary therefore is it to the nature of a believer, to forget the place of his rest and consolation ! And to look for so much of these from the creatures, in this our present pilgrimage and prison, as, alas, too commonly we do ! Thus do we kill our comforts, and then complain for want of them. How should you have any life or constancy of consolations, that are so seldom, so slight, so unbe-

living, and so heartless, in your thoughts of heaven! You know what a folly it is to expect any peace, which shall not come from Christ as the fountain. And you must learn as well to understand what a folly it is to expect any solid joys, or stable peace, which is not fetched from heaven, as from the end. O that christians were careful to live with one eye still on Christ crucified, and the other on Christ coming in glory! If the everlasting joys were more in your believing thoughts, spiritual joys would more abound at present in your hearts. It is no more wonder that you are comfortless when heaven is forgotten, or doubtingly remembered, than you are faint when you eat not, or cold when you stir not, or when you have not fire or clothes.

But when christians do not only let fall their expectations of the things unseen, but also heighten their expectations from the creature, then do they most infallibly prepare for their fears and troubles, and estrangedness from God, and with both hands draw calamities on their souls. Who ever meets with a distressed, complaining soul, where one or both of these is not apparent; their low expectations from God hereafter, or their high expectations from the creature now? What doth keep us under such trouble and disquietness, but that we will not expect what God hath promised; or we will needs expect what he promised not? And then we complain when we miss of those expectations which we foolishly and ungroundedly raised to ourselves. We are grieved for crosses, for losses, for wrongs from our enemies, for unkind or unfaithful dealings of our friends, for sickness, for contempt and disesteem in the world! But who bid you look for any better? Was it prosperity and riches, and credit, and friends, that God called you to believe for? or that you became christians for? or that you had an absolute promise of in the word? If you will make promises to yourself, and then your own promises deceive you, whom should you blame for that? Nay, do we not, as it were, necessitate God hereby to embitter all our comforts here below, and to make every creature as a scorpion to us, because we will needs make them our petty deities? We have less comfort in them than else we might have, because we must needs have more than we should have. You might have more faithfulness from your friends, more reputation in the world,

more sweetness in all your present enjoyments, if you looked for less. Why is it that you can scarce name a creature near you, that is not a scourge to you, but because you can scarce name one that is not your idol, or at least which you do not expect more from than you ought? Nay, (which is one of the saddest considerations of this kind that can be imagined) God is fain to scourge us most even by the highest professors of religion, because we have most idolized them, and had such excessive expectations from them. One would have thought it next to an impossibility, that such men, and so many of them, could ever have been drawn to do that against the church, against that gospel-ministry and ordinances of God (which once seemed dearer to them than their lives) which hath since been done, and which yet we fear. But a believing eye, can discern the reason of this sad providence in part. Never men were more idolized, and therefore no wonder if were never so afflicted by any. Alas, when will we learn by scripture and providence so to know God and the creature, as to look for far more from him, and less from them! We have looked for wonders from Scotland, and what is come of it? We looked that war should have even satisfied our desires, and when it had removed all visible impediments, we thought we should have had such a glorious reformation as the world never knew! And now behold a Babel, and a mangled deformation! What high expectations had we from an assembly! What expectations from a parliament! And where are they now? O hear the word of the Lord, ye low-spirited people! "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils: for wherein is he to be accounted of;" Isa. ii. 22. "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord; for he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh. Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters," &c.; Jer. xvii. 5—8. "Surely men of low degree are vanity; and men of high degree are a lie. To be laid in the balance they are altogether lighter than vanity;" Psal. lxii. 9. Let me warn you all, for the time to come, to take the creature as a creature; remember its frailty; look for no more from it than its part. If you have the nearest,

dearest, godly friends, expect to feel the sting of their corruptions, as well as to taste the sweetness of their grace. And they must expect the like from you.

If you ask me why I speak so much of these things here ? It is, 1. Because I find that much of the trouble of ordinary Christians comes from their crosses in the creature, and the frustration of these their sinful expectations. 2. And because I have said so little of it in the following directions, they being intended for the cure of another kind of trouble, therefore I have said thus much here of this.

Having premised this advice, I take myself bound to add one thing more ; that is, an apology for the publication of this imperfect piece, whether just or insufficient other men must judge. I confess I am so apprehensive of the luxuriant fertility, or licentiousness of the press of late, as being a design of the enemy to bury and overwhelm in a crowd those judicious, pious, excellent writings, that before were so commonly read by the people, that I think few men should now print without an apology, much less such as I. Who hath more lamented this inundation of impertinencies ? or more accused the ignorance and pride of others, that must needs disgorge themselves of all their crudities, as if they were such precious conceptions proceeding from the Holy Ghost, that the world might not, without very great injury, be deprived of ; and it were pity that all men should not be made partakers of them ? And how come I to go on in the same fault myself ? Truly I have no excuse or argument, but those of the times, necessity, and providence ; which how far they may justify me, I must leave to the judge. Being in company with a troubled, complaining friend, I perceived that it must be some standing counsel which might be frequently perused, that must satisfactorily answer the complaints that I heard, and not a transient speech, which would quickly slip away. Being therefore obliged as a pastor, and as a friend, and as a Christian, to tender my best assistance for relief, I was suddenly, in the moment of speaking, moved to promise one sheet of paper, which might be useful to that end. Which promise, when I attempted to perform, the one sheet lengthened to thirty, and my one day's (intended) work was drawn out to a just month. I

went on far before I had the least thought to let any eye behold it, except the party for whom I wrote it. But at last I perceived an impossibility of contracting, and I was presently possessed with confident apprehensions, that a copy of those directions might be useful to many other of my poor neighbors and friends that needed them as much. Upon which apprehension I permitted my pen to run more at large, and to deviate from the case of the party that I wrote for, and to take in the common case of most troubled, doubting souls. By that time that I had finished it, I received letters from several parts, from learned and judicious divines importuning me to print more, having understood my intentions to desist, as having done too much already, even at first. I confess I was not much moved by their importunity, till they seconded it with their arguments; whereof one was, the experience of the success of former writings, which might assure me it was not displeasing to God. I had many that urged me, I had no one but myself to draw me back. I apprehended that a writing of this nature might be useful to the many weak, perplexed Christians through the land. Two reasons did at first come in against it. The first was, that if there were no more written on this subject than Dr. Sibbs' "Bruised Reed, and Soul's Conflict," and Mr. Jos. Symonds' "Deserted Soul's Case and Cure," there need no more. Especially there being also Dr. Preston's Works, and many of Perkins', to this use; and Mr. Ball, and Mr. Culverwell of Faith, and divers the like. To this my own judgment answered, that yet these brief directions might add somewhat that might be useful to the weak, as to the method of their proceedings, if not to the matter. And my brethren stopped my mouth by telling me, that others had written before me of heaven and baptism, and yet my labours were not lost. Next this, I thought the crudity and weakness of the writing was such, as should prohibit the publication, it being unfit to thrust upon the world the hasty, undigested lines, that were written for the use of one person. To this my thoughts replied, that, 1. For all that, it might be useful to poor women, and country people, who most commonly prove the troubled spirits, for whose sakes I wrote it. Had I writ for the use of learned men, I would have tried to make

it fitter for their use ; and if I could not, I would have suppressed it. 2. It was my pride that nourished this scruple, which moved me not to appear so homely to the world, and therefore I cast it by. One thing more I confess did much prevail with me to make these papers public, and that is, the Antinomians' common confident obtrusion of their anti-evangelical doctrines and methods for comforting troubled souls. They are the most notorious mountebanks in this art, the highest pretenders, and most unhappy performers, that most of the reformed churches ever knew. And none usually are more ready to receive their doctrines, than such weak women, or unskilful people, that being in trouble, are like a sick man in great pain, who is glad to hear what all can say, and to make trial of every thing by which he hath any hope of ease. And then there is so much opium in these mountebanks' *Nepenthes*, or *Antidote of rest* : so many principles of carnal security and presumption, which tend to the present ease of the patient, whatever follow, that it is no wonder if some well-meaning Christians do quickly swallow the bait, and proclaim the rare effects of this medicament, and the admirable skill of this unskilful sect, to the ensnaring of others, especially that are in the like distress. Especially when they meet with some divines of our own, who do deliver to them some master-points of this system of mistakes, which are so necessarily concatenated to the rest, that they may easily see, if they have one, they must have all, unless they hold contradictions. As to instance in the doctrine of justification before faith, or the dissolving the obligation to punishment, which is nothing but the remission of sin before faith. So that nothing remains since Christ's death (as some) or since God's decree (as others) but only to have your pardon manifested, or to be justified in conscience, or (as some phrase it) to have that justification which is terminated in conscience. There is a very judicious man, Mr. Benjamin Woodbridge, of Newbury, hath written so excellent well against this error, and in so small room, being but one sermon, that I would advise all private Christians to get one of them, and peruse it, as one of the best, easiest, cheapest preservatives against the contagion of this part of Antinomianism.

I had not troubled the reader with this apology, had I thought so well of this writing, as to be sufficient apology for itself; or had I not taken it for a heinous crime to speak idly in print.

For the doctrine here contained, it is of a middle strain, between (I think) the extremes of some others. I have labored so to build up peace as not thereby to fortify presumption. And perhaps in some points you may see my meaning more plainly, which through the obscurity of former writings, I was misunderstood in. As for the manner of this writing, I must desire them that expect learning or exactness, to turn away their eyes, and know, that I wrote it not for such as they. I use not to speak any thing but plain English to that sex, or to that use and end, for which I wrote these lines. I wrote to the utmost verge of my paper, before I thought to make it public, and so had no room for marginal quotations, (nor time to transcribe that copy, that I might have room,) nor indeed much mind of them, if I had both room and time.

As in all the removes of my life I have been still led to that place or state which was farthest from my own thoughts, and never designed or contrived by myself; so all the writings that yet I have published, are such as have been by some sudden, unexpected occasion extorted from me, while those that I most affected have been stifled in the conception; and those I have most labored in, must lie buried in the dust, that I may know it is God that is the disposer of all. Experience persuadeth me to think, that God, who hath compelled me hitherto, intendeth to make this hasty writing a means for the calming of some troubled souls; which if he do, I have my end. If I can do nothing to the church's public peace, either through my own unskilfulness and unworthiness, or through the prevalency of the malady; yet will it be my comfort, to further the peace of the poorest Christian. (Though to the former also I shall contribute my best endeavors, and am with this sending to the press some few sheets to that end, with our "Worcester-shire Agreement.") The full accomplishment of both; the subduing of the prince of darkness, confusion, and contention; the destroying of that pride, self-esteem, self-seeking, and carnal-mindedness, which remaining even in the best, are the disturbers

of all peace ; the fuller discovery of the sinfulness of unpeaceable principles, dispositions, and practices ; the nearer closure of all true believers, and the hastening of the church's everlasting peace ;—these are his daily prayers, who is

A zealous desirer of the peace of the
church, and of every faithful soul,

RICHARD BAXTER.

May 7, 1653.

THE
RIGHT METHOD
FOR
A SETTLED PEACE OF CONSCIENCE,
AND
SPIRITUAL COMFORT.

It must be understood, that the case here to be resolved is not, How an unhumbled, profane sinner, that never was convinced of sin and misery, should be brought to a settled peace of conscience. Their carnal peace must first be broken, and they must be so far humbled, as to find the want and worth of mercy, that Christ and his consolations may not seem contemptible in their eyes. It is none of my business now, to give any advice for the furthering of this conviction or humiliation. But the case in hand is, 'How a sinner may attain to a settled peace of conscience, and some competent measure of the joy of the Holy Ghost, who hath been convinced of sin and misery, and long made a profession of holiness, but liveth in continual doubtings of their sincerity, and fears of God's wrath, because of an exceeding deadness of spirit, and a want of that love to God, and delight in him, and sweetness in duty, and witness of the Spirit, and communion with God, and the other like evidences which are found in the saints.' How far the party is right or wrong in the discovery of these wants, I now meddle not.

Whether they judge rightly or wrongly, the Directions may be useful to them. And though I purposely meddle not with the unhumbled, that feel not the want of Christ and mercy, yet most that falls may be useful to all that profess the Christian faith. For I shall study so to avoid the extremes in my doctrinal directions, as may conduce to your escaping the desperate extremes of ungrounded comforts, and causeless terrors in your own spirit.

Of my directions, the first shall be only general, and the rest more particular. And all of them I must entreat you, 1. To observe the order and method, as well as the matter; and that you would practise them in the same order as I place them. 2. And to remember that it is not only comfortable words, but it is directions for your own practice, which here I prescribe you; and therefore that it is not the bare reading of them that will cure you; but if you mean to have the benefit of them, you must bestow more time in practising them, than I have done in penning them; yea, you must make it the work of your life. And let not that startle you, or seem tedious to you, for it will be no more grievous a work to a well-tempered soul, than eating or drinking, or sleep, or recreation is to an healthful body; and than it is to an honest woman to love and delight in her husband and her children, which is no grievous task.

Direction I. 'Get as clear a discovery as you can of the true cause of your doubts and troubles; for if you should mistake in the cause, it would much frustrate the most excellent means for the cure.'

The very same doubts and complaints, may come from several causes in several persons, and therefore admit not of the same way of cure. Sometimes the cause begins in the body, and thence proceedeth to the mind; sometimes it begins in the mind, and thence distempereth the body. Sometimes in the mind, it is most, or first, from worldly crosses, and thence proceedeth to spiritual things. And of spiritual matters, sometimes it begins upon scruples or differences in religion, or points of doctrine; sometimes and most commonly, from the sense of our own infirmities; sometimes it is only from ordinary infirmities; sometimes from some extraordinary decays of inward grace; sometimes from the neglect

of some weighty duty ; and sometimes from the deep wounds of some heinous, secret, or scandalous sin ; and sometimes it is merely from the fresh discovery of that which before we never did discern ; and sometimes from the violent assault of extraordinary temptations. Which of these is your own case, you must be careful to find out, and to apply the means for cure accordingly. Even of true Christians, the same means will not fit all. The difference of natures, as well as of actual cases, must be considered. One hath need of that tender handling, which would undo another ; and he again hath need of that rousing which another cannot bear. And therefore understand, that when I have given you all the directions that I can, I must, in the end hereof, advise you to take the counsel of a skilful minister, in applying and making use of them : for it is in this, as in the case of physic, when we have written the best books of receipts, or for methodical cures ; yet we must advise people to take heed how they use them, without the advice of a learned and faithful physician ; for medicines must not be only fitted to diseases, but to bodies : that medicine will kill one man, which will cure another of the same distemper ; such difference there may be in their age, strength, complexion, and other things. So is it much in our present case. And therefore, as when all the physic books in the world are written, and all receipts known, yet will there be still a necessity of physicians : so when all discoveries and directions are made in divinity, there will still be a necessity of a constant standing ministry. And as ignorant women and empirics do kill oftentimes more than they cure, though they have the best receipts, for want of judgment and experience to use them aright ; so do ignorant teachers and guides by men's souls, though they can say the same words as a judicious pastor, and repeat the same texts of Scripture. Not that I mean, that such can do no good : yea, much no doubt, if they will humbly, compassionately, and faithfully improve their talents within the verge of their own calling ; which if they go beyond, ordinarily a remarkable judgment followeth their best labors ; both to the churches, and particular souls that make use of them. And therefore because (if my conjectural prognostics fail not, as I daily pray they may) we are like to be more tried and plagued in this way, than ever were any of our forefathers, since

Adam's days, till now : and seeing this is the hour of our temptation, wherein God is purposely separating the chaff, and discovering to the world the dangers of injudicious, misguided zeal ; I shall therefore both first and last advise you, as ever you would have a settled peace of conscience, keep out of the hand of vagrant and seducing mountebanks, under what names, or titles, or pretences soever they may assault you. Especially suspect all that bestow as much pains to win you to their party, as to win you to Christ.

Direct. II. ' Make as full a discovery as you can, how much of the trouble of your mind doth arise from your melancholy and bodily distempers, and how much from discontenting afflictions in your worldly estate, or friends, or name, and according to your discovery make use of the remedy.'

I put these two causes of trouble here together in the beginning, because I will presently dismiss them ; and apply the rest of these directions only to those troubles that are raised from sins and wants in grace.

1. For melancholy, I have by long experience found it to have so great and common a hand in the fears and troubles of mind, that I meet with not one of many, that live in great troubles and fears for any long time together ; but melancholy is the main seat of them ; though they feel nothing in their body, but all in their mind. I would have such persons make use of some able godly physician, and he will help them to discern how much of their trouble comes from melancholy. Where this is the cause, usually the party is fearful of almost every thing ; a word, or a sudden thought will disquiet them. Sometimes they are sad, and scarce know why : all comforts are of no continuance with them ; but as soon as you have done comforting them, and they be never so well satisfied, yet the trouble returns in a few days or hours, as soon as the dark and troubled spirits return to their former force : they are still addicted to musing and solitariness, and thoughts will run in their minds, that they cannot lay them by : if it go any thing far, they are almost always assaulted with temptations to blasphemy, to doubt whether there be a God, or a Christ, or the scriptures be true ; or whether there be a heaven or a hell ; and oft tempted to speak some blasphemous words against God ; and this with such

opportunity, that they can hardly forbear; and oftentimes they are tempted to make away themselves. When it goes so far, they are next the loss of the use of reason, if it be not prevented.

Now to those that find that melancholy is the cause of their troubles, I would give this advice. 1. Expect not that rational, spiritual remedies, should suffice for this cure: for you may as well expect that a good sermon, or comfortable words, should cure the falling sickness, or palsy, or a broken head, as to be a sufficient cure to your melancholy fears; for this is as real a bodily disease as the other; only because it works on the spirits and fantasy, on which words of advice do also work, therefore such words, and scripture and reason, may somewhat resist it, and may palliate or allay some of the effects at the present; but as soon as time hath worn off the force and effects of these reasons, the distemper presently returns.

For the humor hath the advantage; (1.) Of continual presence. (2.) Of a more necessary, natural, and sensible way of working. As if a man be in an easy lethargy, you may awake him so long as you are calling on him aloud; but as soon as you cease, he is asleep again. Such is the case of the melancholy in their own sorrows; for it is as natural for melancholy to cause fears and disquietness of mind, as for phlegm in a lethargy to cause sleep.

Do not therefore, lay the blame on your books, friends, counsels, instructions (no nor all on your soul) if these troubles be not cured by words: but labor to discern truly how much of your trouble comes this way, and then fix in your mind in all your inquiries, reading, and hearing, that it is the other part of your trouble which is truly rational, and not this part of it which is from melancholy, that these means were ordained to remove (though God may also bless them extraordinarily to do both.) Only constant importunate prayer is a fit and special means for the curing of all.

2. When you have truly found out how much of your disquietness proceeds from melancholy, acquit your soul from that part of it; still remember in all your self-examinations, self-judgings, and reflections on your heart, that it is not directly to be charged with those sorrows that come from your spleen; save only remotely, as all other diseases are the fruits of sin; as a lethargic dulness is the

deserved fruit of sin; but he that should charge it immediately on his soul, should wrong himself, and he that would attempt the cure, must do it on the body.

3. If you would have these fears and troubles removed, apply yourself to the proper cure of melancholy. (1.) Avoid all passion of sorrow, fear, and anger, as much as you can; and all occasions, and discontents and grief. (2.) Avoid much solitariness, and be most commonly in some cheerful company. Not that I would have you do as the foolish sinners of the world do, to drink away melancholy, and keep company with sensual, vain, and unprofitable persons, that will draw you deeper into sin, and so make your wound greater instead of healing it, and multiply your troubles when forced to look back on your sinful loss of time. But keep company with the more cheerful sort of the godly. There is no mirth like the mirth of believers, which faith doth fetch from the blood of Christ, and from the promises of the word, and from experiences of mercy, and from the serious fore-apprehensions of our everlasting blessedness. Converse with men of strongest faith, that have this heavenly mirth, and can speak experimentally of the joy of the Holy Ghost; and these will be a great help to the reviving of your spirit, and changing your melancholy habit, so far as without a physician it may be expected. Yet sometimes it may not be amiss to confer with some that are in your own case, that you may see that your condition is not singular. For melancholy people, in such distresses, are ready to think, that never any was in the case as they are in; or at least, never any that were truly godly. When you hear people of the most upright lives, and that truly fear God, to have the same complaints as you have yourself, it may give you some hopes that it is not so bad as you before did imagine. However be sure that you avoid solitariness as much as you well can. (3.) Also take heed of too deep, fixed, musing thoughts; studying and serious meditating be not duties for the deeply melancholy (as I shall shew more in the following directions); you must let these alone till you are better able to perform them, lest by attempting those duties which you cannot perform, you shall utterly disable yourself from all: therefore I would advise you by all means, to shake and rouse yourself out of such musings, and suddenly to

turn your thoughts away to something else. (4.) To this end, be sure that you avoid idleness and want of employment ; which as it is a life not pleasing to God, so it is the opportunity for melancholy thoughts to be working, and the chiefest season for satan to tempt you. Never let the devil find you unemployed, but see that you go cheerfully about the works of your calling, and follow it with diligence ; and that time which you redeem for spiritual exercises, let it be most spent in thanksgiving, and praises, and heavenly conference.

These things may do much for prevention and abating your disease, if it be not gone too far ; but if it be, you were best have recourse to the physician, and expect God's blessing in the use of means ; and you will find when your body is once cured, the disquietness of your mind will vanish of itself.

2. The second part of this direction was, that you take notice how much of your disquietness may proceed from outward crosses ; for it is ordinary for these to lie at the root, and bring the heart into disquiet and discontent, and then trouble for sin doth follow after. Alas, how oft have I seen verified that of the apostle ; 2, Cor. vii. 10. "The sorrow of the world worketh death." How many, even godly people have I known, that through crosses in children, or in friends, or losses in estates, or wrongs from men, or perplexities that through some unadvisedness they were cast into, or the like, have fallen into mortal disease, or into such a fixed melancholy, that some of them have gone beside themselves ; and others have lived in fears and doubting ever after, by the removal of the disquietness to their consciences ? How sad a thing is it, that we should thus add to our own afflictions ? And the heavier we judge the burden, the more we lay on ! As if God had not done enough, or would not sufficiently afflict us. We may more comfortably bear that which God layeth on us, than that which we immediately lay upon ourselves ! Crosses are not great or small, according to the bulk of the matter, but according chiefly to the mind of the sufferer. Or else, how could holy men "rejoice in tribulation, and be exceeding glad that they are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ ?" Reproaches, wrongs, losses, are all without you ; unless you open them the door willfully yourself, they cannot

inward the heart. God hath not put the joy or grief of your heart in any other man's power, but in your own. It is you, therefore, that do yourselves the greatest mischief. God afflicts your body, or men wrong you in your state or name (a small hurt if it go no farther) and therefore you will afflict your soul! But a sadder thing yet is it to consider of, that men fearing God should so highly value the things of the world. They who in their covenant with Christ, are engaged to renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil. They that have taken God in Christ for their portion, for their all; and have resigned themselves and all that they have to Christ's disposal. Whose very business in this world, and their christian life, consisteth so much in resisting the devil, mortifying the flesh, and overthrowing the world! And it is God's business in his inward works of grace, and his outward teachings, and sharp afflictions, and examples of others, to convince them of the vanity and transience of the world, and thoroughly to wean them from it; and yet that it should be so high in their estimation, and sit so close to their hearts, that they cannot bear the loss of it without such discontent, disquiet, and distraction of mind! Yea, though when all is gone, they have their God left them, they have their Christ still, whose they took for their treasure; they have opportunities for their souls, they have the sure promise of glory, yea, and a promise, that "all things shall work together for their good;" yea, and for that one thing that is taken from them, they have yet an hundred outward mercies remaining, that yet even believers should have so much unbelief! and have their faith to seek, when they should use it, and live by it! And that God should seem so small in their eye, as not to satisfy or quiet them, unless they have the world with him; and that the world should still seem so amiable, when God hath done so much to bring it into contempt! Truly this (and more) shows that the work of mortification is very imperfect in professors, and that we bend not the force of our daily strivings and endeavors that way. If christians did bestow as much time and pains in mortifying the flesh, and getting down the interest of it in the soul, that Christ's interest may be advanced, as they do about controversies, external duties, formalities, tasks of devotion, and self-permeating fears, O what excellent christians should we then be! And

how happily would most of our disquiets be removed ; Aha, if we are so unfit to part with one outward comfort now, upon the disposal of our Father's providence, how should we forsake all for Christ ? O what shall we do at death, when all must be parted with ! As ever therefore you would live in true christian peace, set more by Christ, and less by the world, and all things in it ; and hold all that you possess so loosely, that it may not be grievous to you when you must leave them.

So much for the troubles that arise from your body and outward state. All the rest shall be directed for the curing of those troubles that arise immediately from more spiritual causes.

Direct. III. ' Be sure that you first lay sound apprehensions of God's nature in your understanding, and lay them deeply.'

This is the first article of your creed, and the first part of " life eternal, to know God !" His substance is quite past human understanding ; therefore never make any attempt to reach to the knowledge of it, or to have any positive conceivings of it, for they will be all but idols, or false conceptions ; but his attributes are manifested to our understandings. Well consider, that even under the terrible law, when God proclaims to Moses his own name, and therein his nature, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* the first and greatest part is, " The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin." And he hath sworn, " That he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he return and live." Think not therefore of God's mercifulness ; with diminishing, extenuating thoughts, nor limit it by the bounds of our frail understandings ; For the heavens are not so far above the earth, as his thoughts and ways are above ours. Still remember that you must have no low thoughts of God's goodness, but apprehend it as bearing proportion with his power. As it is blasphemy to limit his power, so it is to limit his goodness. The advantages that your soul will get by this right knowledge, and estimation of God's goodness, will be these.

1. This will make God appear more amiable in your eyes, and then you will love him more readily and abundantly. And love, (1.) Is effectually consolatory in the very working ; so much love, usu-

ally so much comfort, (I mean this love of complacency; for a love of desire there may be without comfort). (2.) It will breed persuasions of God's love to you again, and so comfort. (3.) It will be an unquestionable evidence of true grace, and so comfort.

The affections follow the understanding's conceptions. If you think of God as one that is glad of all advantages against you, and delighteth in his creatures' misery, it is impossible you should love him. The love of yourselves is so deeply rooted in nature, that we cannot lay it by, nor love any thing that is absolutely and directly against us. We conceive of the devil as an absolute enemy to God and man, and one that seeks our destruction, and therefore we cannot love him. And the great cause why troubled souls do love God no more, is because they represent him to themselves in an ugly odious shape. To think of God as one that seeks and delighteth in man's ruin, is to make him as the devil. And then what wonder if instead of loving him, and delighting in him, you tremble at the thoughts of him, and fly from him. As I have observed children, when they have seen the devil painted on the wall, in an ugly shape, they have partly feared; and partly bated it. If you do so by God in your fancy, it is not putting the name of God on him when you have done, that will reconcile your affections to him as long as you strip him of his divine nature. Remember the Holy Ghost's description of God, 1 John iv. 16. "God is love."—Write these words deep in your understanding.

2. Hereby you will have this advantage also, that your thoughts of God will be more sweet and delightful to you. For as glorious and beautiful sights to your eyes, and melodious sounds to your ears, and sweet smells, tastes, &c. are all delightful: when things deformed, stinking, &c. are all loathsome, and we turn away from one with abhorrency, but for the other, we would often see, taste, &c. and enjoy them. So it is with the objects of our mind; God hath given no command for duty, but what most perfectly agreeth with the nature of the object. He hath therefore bid us love God and delight in him above all, because he is above all in goodness; even infinitely and inconceivably good; else we could not love him above all, nor would he ever command us so to do. The object is as ever exactly fitted to its part, as to draw out the love and delight

of our hearts, as the precept is on its part, to oblige us to it. And indeed the nature of things is a precept to duty, and is which we call the law of nature.

3. Hereupon will follow this further advantage, that your thoughts will be both more easily drawn toward God, and more frequent and constant on him; for delightful objects draw the heart to them, as the loadstone doth the iron. How gladly, and freely, and frequently do you think of your dearest friends. And if you did firmly conceive of God, as one that is ten thousand times more gracious, loving and amiable than any friend you have in the world, it would make you not only to love him above all friends, but also more freely, delightfully, and unweariedly to think of him.

4. And then you would hence have this further advantage, that you would have less backwardness to any duty, and less weariness in duty; you would find more delight in prayer, meditation, and speech of God, when once God himself were more lovely and delightful in your eyes.

5. All these advantages would produce a further, that is, the growth of all your graces. For it is impossible, but this growth of love, and frequent and delightful thoughts of God, and addresses to him, should cause an increase of all the rest.

6. Hereupon your evidences would be more clear and discernible. For grace in strength and action would be easily found; and would not this resolve all your doubts at once?

7. Yea, the very exercise of these several graces would be comfortable.

8. And hereupon you would have more humble familiarity and communion with God; for love, delight, and frequent addresses, would overcome strangeness and disacquaintance, which make us fly from God, as a fish, or bird, or wild beast, will from the face of a man, and would give us access with boldness and confidence. And this would banish sadness and terror, as the sun dispelleth darkness and cold.

9. At least you would hence have this advantage, that the fixed apprehension of God's goodness and merciful nature, would cause a fixed apprehension of the probability of your happiness, as long as you are willing to be happy in God's way. For reason will tell you,

that he who is love itself, and whose goodness is equal to his almightiness, and who hath sworn, that he hath no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he repent and live, will not destroy a poor soul that lieth in submission at his feet, and is so far from resolved rebellion against him, that he grieveth that it is no better, and can please him no more.

10. However, these right apprehensions of God would overcome those terrors which are raised only by false apprehensions of him. And doubtless a very great part of men's causeless troubles, are raised from such misapprehensions of God. For Satan knows, that if he can bring you to think of God as a cruel tyrant and blood-thirsty man-hater, then he can drive you from him in terror, and turn all your love and cheerful obedience into hatred and slavish fear. I say therefore again do not only get, - but also fix deep in your understanding, the highest thoughts of God's natural goodness and graciousness that you possibly can raise. For when they are at the highest, they come short ten thousand fold.

Object. 'But God's goodness lieth not in mercy to men, as I have read in great divines; he may be perfectly good, though he should for ever torment the most innocent creatures.'

Answer. These are ignorant, presumptuous intrusions into that which is unsearchable. Where doth scripture say as you say? Judge of God as he revealeth himself, or you will but delude yourself, and abuse him. All his works represent him merciful; for "his mercy is over all his works," and legible in them all. His word saith, "he is good, and doth good;" Psalm cxix. 68. cxlv. 9. How himself doth proclaim his own name, (Exod. xxxiv. 6. 7,) I told you before. The most merciful men are his liveliest image; and therefore he plants mercy in them in their conversion, as a principal part of their new nature. And commands of mercifulness are a great part of his law; and he bids us "be merciful, as our heavenly Father is merciful;" Luke vi. 36. Now if this were none of his nature, how could he be the pattern of our new nature herein? And if he were not infinitely merciful himself, how could we be required to be merciful as he is? Who dare say, 'I am more merciful than God?'

Object. 'But God is just as well as merciful; and for all his merciful nature, he will damn most of the world forever in hell.'

Ans. 1. But James saith, "Mercy rejoiceth against judgment;" James ii. 13. 2. God is necessarily the governor of the world (while there is a world,) and therefore must govern it in justice, and so must not suffer his mercy to be perpetually abused by wicked, wilful, contemptuous sinners. But then consider two things: (1.) That he destroyeth not humble souls that lie at his feet, and are willing to have mercy on his easy terms, but only the stubborn despisers of his mercy. He danimeth none but those that will not be saved in his way; that is, that will not accept of Christ and salvation freely given them. (I speak of those that hear the gospel; for others, their case is more unknown to us.) And is it any diminution to his infinite mercy, that he will not save those that will not be entreated to accept of salvation? (2.) And consider how long he useth to wait on sinners, and even beseech them to be reconciled to him, before he destroyeth them; and that he heapeth up multitudes of mercies on them, even in their rebellion, to draw them to repentance, and so to life. And is it unmercifulness yet if such men perish?

Object. 'But if God were so infinite in mercy, as you say, why doth he not make all these men willing, that so they may be saved?'

Ans. God having created the world and all things in it, at first, did make them in a certain nature and order, and so establish them as by a fixed law; and he thereupon is their governor, to govern every thing according to its nature. Now man's nature was, to be principled with an inclination to his own happiness, and to be led to it by objects in a moral way, and in the choice of means to be a free agent, and the guider of himself under God. As governor of the rational creature, God doth continue that same course of ruling them by laws, and drawing them by ends and objects as their natures do require. And in this way he is not wanting to them; his laws are now laws of grace, and universal in the tenor of the free gift and promise, for he hath there given life in Christ to all that will have it; and the objects propounded are sufficient in their kind, to work even the most wonderful effects on men's souls, for they are God himself, and Christ and glory. Besides, God giveth men natural faculties, that they may have the use of reason; and there is nothing more unreasonable than to refuse this offered mercy. He

giveth inducing arguments in the written word, and sermons, and addeth such mercies and afflictions, that one should think should bow the hardest heart. Besides, the strivings and motions of his Spirit within, are more than we can give an account of. Now is not this as much as belongs to God as governor of the creature according to its nature? And for the giving of a new nature, and creating new hearts in men, after all their rebellious rejecting of grace, this is a certain miracle of mercy, and belongs to God in another relation (even as the free chooser of his elect) and not directly as the governor of the universe. This is from his special providence, and the former from his general. Now special providences are not to be as common as the general, nor to subvert God's ordinary, established course of government. If God please to stop Jordan, and dry up the Red Sea for the passage of the Israelites, and to cause the sun to stand still for Joshua, must he do so still for every man in the world, or else be accounted unmerciful? The sense of this objection is plainly this, God is not so rich in mercy, except he will new make all the world, or govern it above its nature. Suppose a king know his subjects to be so wicked, that they have every one a full design to famish or kill themselves, or poison themselves with something which is enticing by its sweetness, the king not only makes a law, strictly charging them all to forbear to touch that poison, but he sendeth special messengers to entreat them to it, and tell them the danger. If these men will not hear him, but wilfully poison themselves, is he therefore unmerciful? But suppose that he hath three or four of his sons that are infected with the same wickedness, and he will not only command and entreat them, but he will lock them up, or keep the poison from them, or will feed them by violence with better food, is he unmerciful unless he will do so by all the rest of his kingdom?

Lastly. If all this will not satisfy you; consider, (1.) That it is most certain God is love, and infinite in mercy, and hath no pleasure in the death of sinners. (2.) But it is utterly uncertain to us how God worketh on man's will inwardly by his Spirit. (3.) Or yet what intolerable inconvenience there may be if God should work in other ways; therefore we must not upon such uncertainties deny certainties, nor from some unreasonable scruples about the manner

of God's working grace, deny the blessed nature of God, which himself hath most evidently proclaimed to the world.

I have said the more of this, because I find Satan harp so much on this string with many troubled souls, especially on the advantage of some common doctrines. For false doctrine still tends to the overthrow of solid peace and comfort. Remember therefore before all other thoughts for the obtaining of peace, to get high thoughts of the gracious and lovely nature of God.

Direct. IV. Next this, 'Be sure that you deeply apprehend the gracious nature, disposition, and office, of the Mediator Jesus Christ.'

Though there can no more be said of the gracious nature of the Son than of the Father's, even that his goodness is infinite; yet these two advantages this consideration will add unto the former. 1. You will see here goodness and mercy in its condescension, and nearer to you than in the divine nature alone it was. Our thoughts of God are necessarily more strange, because of our infinite distance from the Godhead; and therefore our apprehensions of God's goodness will be the less working, because less familiar. But in Christ, God is come down into our nature, and so Infinite goodness and mercy is incarnate. The man Christ Jesus is able now to save to the utmost all that come to God by him. We have a merciful High-Priest that is acquainted with our infirmities. 2. Herein we see the will of God putting forth itself for our help in the most astonishing way that could be imagined. Here is more than merely a gracious inclination. It is an office of saving and shewing mercy also that Christ hath undertaken; even "to seek and to save that which was lost;" to bring home straying souls to God; to be the great Peace-maker between God and man, to reconcile God to man, and man to God; and so to be the Head and Husband of his people. Certainly the devil strangely wrongeth poor, troubled souls in this point, that he can bring them to have such hard, suspicious thoughts of Christ, and so much to overlook the glory of mercy which so shineth in the face of the Son of Mercy itself. How can we more contradict the nature of Christ, and the Gospel description of him, than to think him a destroying hater of his creatures, and one that watcheth for our haling, and hath more mind to

hurt us than to help us? How could he have manifested more willingness to save, and more tender compassion to the souls of men, than he hath fully manifested? That the Godhead should condescend to assume our nature is a thing so wonderful, even to astonishment, that it puts faith to it to apprehend it; for it is ten thousand times more condescension than for the greatest king to become a fly or a toad to save such creatures. And shall we ever have low and suspicious thoughts of the gracious and merciful nature of Christ, after so strange and full a discovery of it? If twenty were ready to drown in the sea, and if one that were able to swim and fetch all out, should cast himself into the water, and offer them his help, were it not foolish ingratitude for any to say, 'I know not yet whether he be willing to help me or not;' and so to have jealous thoughts of his good will, and so perish in refusing his help? How tenderly did Christ deal with all sorts of sinners. He professed that he "came not into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." Did he weep over a rejected, unbelieving people, and was he desirous of their desolation? "How oft would he have gathered them as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings (mark, that he would have done this for them that he cast off) and they would not?" When his disciples would have had "fire come down from heaven to consume those that refused him," he reproves them, and tells them, "They knew not what spirit they were of," (the common case of them that miscarry, by suffering their zeal to overrun their Christian wisdom and meekness). Yea, he prayeth for his crucifiers, and that on the cross, not forgetting them in the heat of his sufferings. Thus he doth by the wicked; but to those that follow him, his tenderness is unspeakable, as you would have said yourself, if you had but stood by and seen him washing his disciples' feet, and wiping them; or bidding Thomas put his finger into his side, "and be not faithless, but believing." Alas! that the Lord Jesus should come from heaven to earth, from glory into human flesh, and pass through a life of misery to a cross, and from the cross to the grave, to manifest openly to the world the abundance of his love, and the tenderness of his heart to sinners; and that after all this, we should suspect him of cruelty, or hard-heartedness and unwillingness to

shew mercy ; and that the devil can so far delude us, as to make us think of the Lamb of God as if he were a tiger or devourer !

But I will say no more of this, because Dr. Sibbs, in his “ Bruised Reed,” hath said so much already. Only remember, that if you would methodically proceed to the attaining of solid comfort, this is the next stone that must be laid. You must be deeply possessed with apprehensions of the most gracious nature and office of the Redeemer, and the exceeding tenderness of his heart to lost sinners.

Direct. V. The next step in right order to comfort is this : ‘ You must believe and consider the full sufficiency of Christ’s sacrifice and ransom for all.’

The controversies about this you need not be troubled at. For as almost all confess this sufficiency, so the Scripture itself, by the plainness and fulness of its expression, makes it as clear as the light, that Christ died for ALL. The fuller proof of this I have given you in public, and shall do yet more publicly, if God will. If Satan would persuade you either that no ransom or sacrifice was ever given for you, or that therefore you have no Redeemer to trust in, and no Saviour to believe in, and no sanctuary to fly to from the wrath of God, he must first prove you either to be no lost sinner, or to be a final, impenitent unbeliever ; that is, that you are dead already ; or else he must delude your understanding, to make you think that Christ died not for all ; and then I confess he hath a sore advantage against your faith and comfort.

Direct. VI. The next thing in order to be done is this : ‘ Get clear apprehensions of the freeness, fulness, and universality of the new covenant or law of grace.’

I mean the promise of remission, justification, adoption, and salvation to all, so they will believe. No man on earth is excluded in the tenor of this covenant. And therefore certainly you are not excluded ; and if not excluded, then you must needs be included. Shew where you are excluded if you can ! You will say, ‘ But for all this, all men are not justified and saved.’ *Ans.* True, because they will not be persuaded to accept the mercy that is freely given them.

The use that I would have you make of this, I will shew in the next.

Direct. VII. ‘You must get the right understanding of the difference between general grace and special. And between the possibility, probability, conditional certainty, and absolute certainty of your salvation. And so between the comfort on the former ground and on the latter.’

And here I shall open to you a rich mine of consolation.

Understand, therefore, that as every particular part of the house is built on the foundation, so is every part of special grace built on general grace. Understand also, that all the four last mentioned particulars do belong to this general grace. As also, that though no man can have absolute certainty of salvation, from the consideration of this general grace alone, yet may it afford abundance of relief to distressed souls, yea, much true consolation. Lastly, Understand that all that hear the Gospel may take part in this consolation, though they have no assurance of their salvation at all, no nor any special, saving grace.

Now when you understand these things well, this is the use that I would have you make of them.

1. Do not begin the way to your spiritual peace by inquiring after the sincerity of your graces, and trying yourselves by signs. Do not seek out for assurance of salvation in the first place, nor do not look and study after the special comforts which come from certainty of special grace, before you have learned, (1.) To perform the duty. (2.) And to receive the comforts which general grace affordeth. Such immethodical, disorderly proceedings keep thousands of poor, ignorant Christians in darkness and trouble almost all their days. Let the first thing you do, be to obey the voice of the Gospel, which calleth you to accept of Christ and special mercy. “This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life.” Fix this deep in your mind, that the nature of the Gospel is first to declare to our understandings the most gracious nature, undertakings, and performances of Christ for us, which must be believed to be true : and secondly to offer this Christ with all his special mercy to every man to whom this Gospel comes, and to entreat them to accept Christ and life, which is freely given and offered to them. Remember then you are a lost sinner. For certain Christ and life in

him is given and offered to you. Now your first work is, presently to accept it ; not to make an unseasonable inquiry, whether Christ be yours, but to take him that he may be yours. If you were condemned, and a pardon were freely given you, on condition you would thankfully take it, and it were offered to you, and you entreated to take it, what would you do in this case ? Would you spend your time and thoughts in searching whether this pardon be already yours ? Or would you not presently take it that it may be yours ? Or if you were ready to famish, and food were offered you, would you stand asking first, ‘ How shall I know that it is mine ? ’ Or rather take and eat it, when you are sure it may be yours if you will. Let me entreat you therefore, when the devil clamors in your ears, ‘ Christ and salvation is none of thine,’ suppose that this voice of God in the Gospel were still in your ears, yea, let it be still in your memory, ‘ O take Christ, and life in him, that thou mayest be saved ? ’ still think that you hear Paul following you with these words : “ We are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ’s stead, be reconciled to God.” Will you but remember this, when you are on your knees in sorrow ; and when you would fain have Christ and life, and you are afraid that God will not give them to you ? I say, remember then, God stands by, beseeching you to accept the same thing which you are beseeching him to give. God is the first suitor and solicitor. God prays you to take Christ, and you pray him to give you Christ. What have you now to do but to take him ! And here understand, that this taking is no impossible business ; it is no more but your hearty consenting, as I shall tell you more anon. If you did but well understand and consider, that believing is the great duty that God calls you to perform, and promiseth to save you if you do truly perform it ; and that this believing is to take, or consent to have the same mercy which you pray for, and are troubled for fear lest you shall miss of it, even Christ and life in him ; this would presently draw forth your consent, and that in so open and express a way, as you could not but discover it, and have the comfort of it. Remember this then, That your first work is to believe, or accept an offered Saviour.

2. You must learn (as I told you) to receive the comforts of uni-

versal or general grace, before you search after the comforts of special grace. I here suppose you so far sound in the doctrine of the Gospel, as neither with some on one hand, to look so much at special grace, as to deny that general grace, which is the ground of it, or presupposed to it. Nor with others, so far to look at universal mercy, as to deny special. Satan will tell you, that all your duties have been done in hypocrisy, and you are unsound at the heart, and have not a drop of saving grace. You are apt to entertain this, and conclude that all this is true: 'If I had any grace, I should have more life, and love, and delight in God; more tenderness of heart, more growth in grace. I should not carry about such a rock in my breast; such a stupid, dull, insensible soul,' &c.

At the present, let us suppose that all this be true: yet see what a world of comfort you may gather from universal or general mercy. I have before opened to you four parts of it, in the cause of your happiness, and three in the effect, which may each of them afford much relief to your troubled soul.

1. Suppose you are yet graceless, is it nothing to you that it is a God of infinite mercy that you have to do with, whose compassions are ten thousand times greater than your dearest friends', or your own husband's?

Object. 'O but yet he will not save the graceless.'

Ans. True, but he is the more ready to give grace, that you may be saved. "If any of you (mark, any of you) do lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth to all men liberally (without desert) and upbraideth not (with our unworthiness or former faults), and it shall be given him;" James i. 4. "If you that are evil can give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it?" Luke xi. 13. Suppose your life were in the hands of your own husband, or your children's life in your hands, would it not exceedingly comfort you or them, to consider whose hands they are in, though yet you had no further assurance how you should be used? It may be you will say, 'But God is no Father to the graceless.' I answer, He is not their Father in so near and strict a sense as he is the Father of believers; but yet a Father he is, even to the wicked; and to convince men of his fatherly mercy to them, he often

so stileth himself. He saith by Moses, Deut. xxxii. 6, to a wicked generation, whose spot was not the spot of his children, "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not he thy Father that bought thee? Hath he not made thee, and established thee?" And the prodigal could call him Father for his encouragement before he returned to him; Luke xv. 16—18. For my own part I must needs profess, that my soul hath more frequent support from the consideration of God's gracious and merciful nature, than from the promise itself.

2. Furthermore, Suppose you were graceless at the present; yet is it not an exceeding comfort, that there is one of such infinite compassion as the Lord Christ, who hath assumed our nature, and is come down to seek and save that which was lost; and is more tender-hearted to poor sinners than we can possibly conceive? Yea, who hath made it his office to heal, and relieve, and restore, and reconcile. Yea, that hath himself endured such temptations as many of ours; "For we have not a High-priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, without sin. Let us therefore, (saith the Holy Ghost) come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need;" Heb. iv. 15, 16. "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part with them, that he might destroy, through death, him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily, he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful High-Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted;" Heb. ii. 14—18. Have you discountenance from men? Christ had much more. Doth God seem to forsake you? So he did by Christ. Are you fain to lie on your knees crying for mercy? Why Christ in the days of his flesh was fain to offer up "strong cries and tears, to him that was able to save him. And was heard in that he feared." It

seems that Christ had distressing fears as well as you, though not sinful fears. Have you horrid temptations? Why Christ was tempted to cast himself headlong, and to worship the devil, for worldly preferment; yea, the devil had power to carry his body up and down to the pinnacle of the temple, and the top of a mountain. If he had such power of you, would you not think yourself certainly his slave? I conclude, therefore, as it is an exceeding ground of comfort to all the sick people in a city, to know that there is a most merciful and skilful physician, that is easily able to cure them, and hath undertaken to do it freely for all that will take him for their physician; so is it a ground of exceeding comfort to the worst of sinners, to all sinners that are yet alive, and have not blasphemed the Holy Ghost, to know what a merciful and efficient Savior hath undertaken the work of man's redemption.

3. Also, suppose that you are graceless, is it nothing that a sufficient sacrifice and ransom is given for you? This is the very foundation of all solid peace. I think this is a great comfort, to know that God looks now for no satisfaction at your hand; and that the number or greatness of your sins, as such, cannot now be your ruin. For certainly no man shall perish for want of the payment of his ransom, or of an expiatory sacrifice for sin, but only for want of a willing heart to accept him that hath freely ransomed them.

4. Also, suppose you are graceless, is it nothing that God hath under his hand and seal made a full and free deed of gift, to you and all sinners, of Christ, and with him of pardon and salvation! And all this on condition of your acceptance or consent? I know the despisers of Christ shall be miserable for all this. But for you that would fain have Christ, is it no comfort to know that you shall have him if you will? And to find this to be the sum of the Gospel? I know you have often read those free offers, Rev. xxii. 17. "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come and drink," &c. Almost all that I have hitherto said to you is comprised in that one text, John iii. 16. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

And as I have shewed it you in the causes, what comfort even general mercy may afford, so let me a little shew it you in the effects. I mean, not only in that God is now satisfied; but as to yourself and every sinner, these three things are produced hereby.

1. There is now a possibility of salvation to you. And certainly even that should be a very great comfort. I know you will meet with some divines, who will tell you that this is no effect of Christ's death; and that else Christ should die for God, if he procured him a power to save which he had not before. But this is no better, than a reproaching of our Redeemer. Suppose that a traitor had so abused a king, that it will neither stand with his own honor, nor justice, nor laws to pardon him; if his compassions were so great, that his own son shall suffer for him, that so the king might be capable of pardoning him, without any diminution of his honor or justice; were it not a vile reproach, if this traitor should tell the prince that suffered for him, 'It was for your father that you suffered to procure him a power of pardoning, it was not for me?' It is true, the king could not pardon him, without satisfaction to his honor and justice. But this was not through any impotency, but because the thing was not fit to be done, and so was morally impossible. For in law we say, dishonest things are impossible. And it had been no less to the king if the traitor had not been pardoned. So it is in our case. And therefore Christ's sufferings could not be more eminently for us, than by enabling the offended Majesty to forgive us; and so taking the greatest impediment out of the way. For when impediments are once removed, God's nature is so gracious and prone to mercy, that he would soon pardon us when once it is fit to be done, and so morally possible in the fullest sense; only men's own unwillingness now stands in the way, and makes it to be not fully fit to be yet done. It is true, in a remote sense, the pardon of sin was always possible; but in the nearest sense it was impossible, till Christ made it possible by his satisfaction.

2. Nay, though you were yet graceless, you have now this comfort, that your salvation is probable as well as possible. You are very fair for it. The terms are not hard in themselves, on which it is tendered. For Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light,

and his commands are not grievous. "The word is high you," even the offer of grace. You need not say, "Who shall ascend to heaven, or go down to hell?" Rom. x. But this will appear in the next.

3. Yea, this exceeding comfort there is, even for them that are graceless, that their salvation is conditionally certain, and the condition is but their own willingness. They may all have Christ and life if they will. Now I desire you in all your doubts, that you will well consider and improve this one truth and ground of comfort. Would you, in the midst of your groans, and complaints and fears take it for a small mercy, to be certain that you shall have Christ if you will? When you are praying for Christ in fear and anguish of spirit, if an angel or voice from heaven should say to you "It shall be unto thee according to thy will, if thou wilt have Christ and live in him, thou shalt?" Would this be no comfort to you? Would it not revive you and overcome your fears?

By this time, I hope you see what abundance of comfort general mercy or grace may afford the soul, before it perceive, (yea, or receive) any special grace; though few of those that receive not special grace can make use of general, yet it is propounded to them as well as others.

1. All the terrifying temptations which are grounded on misrepresentations of God, as if he were a cruel destroyer to be fled from, are dispelled by the due consideration of his goodness, and the deep settled apprehensions of his gracious, merciful, lovely nature, (which indeed is the first work of true religion, and the very master radical act of true grace, and the chief maintainer of spiritual life and motion.)

2. All these temptations are yet more effectually dispelled, by considering this merciful divine nature dwelling in flesh, becoming man, by condescending to the assumption of our human nature; and so come near us, and assuming the office of being the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Saviour of the world.

3. All your doubts and fears that proceed from your former sins, whether of youth or of age, of ignorance or of knowledge, and those which proceed from your legal unworthiness, have all a present remedy in the fullness and sufficiency of Christ's satisfac-

tion, even for all the world ; so that no sin (except the excepted sin) is so great, but it is fully satisfied for ; and though you are unworthy, yet Christ is worthy ; and he came into the world to save only the unworthy (in the strict and legal sense.)

4. All your doubts and fears that arise from an apprehension of God's unwillingness to shew you mercy, and to give you Christ and life in him, arise from the misapprehensions of Christ's unwillingness to be yours ; or at least from the uncertainty of his willingness ; these have all a sufficient remedy in the general extent, and tenor of the new covenant. Can you doubt whether God be willing to give you Christ and life, when he had given them already, even by a deed of gift under his hand, and by a law of grace ? 1 John v. 10—12.

Object. ' But yet all are not pardoned, and possessed of Christ, and so saved.'

Answer. I told you, that is because they will not ; so that (I pray you mark it well) God hath in these four means before mentioned, given even to the graceless so much ground of comfort, that nothing, but their unwillingness to have Christ, is left to be their terror. For though sin be not actually remitted to them, yet it is conditionally remitted, viz. If they will but accept of Christ offered them. Will you remember this, when your doubts are greatest, and you conclude, that certainly Christ is not yours, because you have no true grace ? Suppose it to be true, yet still know, that Christ may be yours if you will, and when you will. This comfort you may have when you can find no evidences of true grace in yourself. So much for that direction.

Direct. VIII. The next thing that you have to do, for building up a stable comfort, and settling your conscience in a solid peace, is this, ' Be sure to get and keep a right understanding of the nature of saving faith.'

As you must have right thoughts of the covenant of grace (of which before,) the want thereof doth puzzle and confound very many Christians ; so you must be sure to have right thoughts of the condition of the covenant. For indeed that grace which causeth you to perform this condition, is your first special saving grace, which you may take as a certain evidence of your justification. And

this condition is the very link which conjoineth all the general foregoing grace to all the rest of the following special grace. The Scripture is so full and plain in assuring pardon and salvation to all true believers, that if you can be sure you are a believer, you need not make any doubt of your interest in Christ, and your salvation. Seeing therefore that all the question will be, Whether you have true faith? Whether you do perform the condition of the new covenant? (for all other doubts God hath given you sufficient ground to resolve, as is said) how much then doth it concern you to have a right understanding of the nature of this faith. Which that you may have, let me tell you briefly what it is. Man's soul hath two faculties, understanding and will: accordingly the objects of man's soul (all beings which it is to receive) have two modifications; truth and goodness (as those to be avoided are evil.). Accordingly God's word or Gospel hath two parts; the revelation of truth, and the offer and promise of some good. This offered good is principally and immediately Christ himself to be joined to us by covenant, as our head and husband. The secondary consequential good, is pardon, justification, reconciliation, adoption, further sanctification and glorification, which are all offered with Christ. By this you may see what saving faith is; it is first, a believing that the Gospel is true; and then an accepting of Christ therein offered to us, with his benefits; or a consenting that he be ours, and we be his; which is nothing but a true willingness to have an offered Christ. Remember this well, that you may make use of it, when you are in doubt of the truth of your faith. Thousands of poor souls have been in the dark, and unable to see themselves to be believers, merely for want of knowing what saving faith is. The Papists place almost all in the mere assent of the understanding. Some of the Reformers made it to be either an assurance of the pardon of our own sins, or a strong persuasion of their pardon, excluding doubting; or (the most moderate) a persuasion of our particular pardon, though mixed with some doubting. The Antinomians strike in with them, and say the same. Hence some divines conclude, that justification and remission go before faith, because the act doth always suppose its object. For they thought that remission already past was the object of justifying faith, supposing

faith to be nothing else but a belief that we are pardoned. Yea, ordinarily, it hath been taught in the writings of our greatest refuters of the Papists, 'That this belief is properly a divine faith, or the belief of a divine testimony, as is the believing of any proposition written in the Scripture (a foul error, which I have confuted in my Book of Rest, part iii. chap. vii.) Most of late have come nearer the truth, and affirmed justifying faith to consist in affiance, or recumbency, or resting on Christ for salvation. No doubt this is one act of justifying faith, but not that which a poor troubled soul should first search after and try itself by (except by affiance, any should mean as Amesius doth, election of Christ, and then it is the same act which I am asserting, but very unfitly expressed.) For, (1.) Affiance is not the principal act nor that wherein the very life of justifying faith doth consist, but only an imperate allowing act, and an effect of the vital act, (which is consent, or willing, or accepting Christ offered;) for it lieth mainly in that which we call the sensitive part, or the passions of the soul. (2.) It is therefore less constant, and so unfitter to try by. For many a poor soul that knows itself unfeignedly willing to have Christ, yet feeleth not a resting on him, or trusting in him, and therefore cries out, 'O I cannot believe;' and think they have no faith. For recumbency, affiance, or resting on Christ, implieth that easing of themselves, or casting off their fears, or doubts, or cares, which true believers do not always find. Many a poor soul complains, 'O I cannot rest on Christ; I cannot trust him!' who yet would have him to be their Lord and Saviour, and can easily be convinced of their willingness. (3.) Besides affiance is not the adequate act of faith, suited to the object in that fulness as it must be received, but willingness or acceptance is. Christ is rested on not only for ourselves as our deliverer, but he is accepted also for himself as our Lord and Master. The full proof of these I have performed in other writings, and oft in your hearing in public, and therefore omit them now. Be sure then to fix this truth deep in your mind, 'That justifying faith is not an assurance of our justification; no, nor a persuasion or belief that we are justified or pardoned, or that Christ died more for us than for others. Nor yet is affiance or resting on Christ the vital principle, certain, constant, full act; but it is the understanding's belief of

the truth of the Gospel, and the will's acceptance of Christ and life offered to us therein ; which acceptance is but the hearty consent or willingness that he be yours, and you his. This is the faith which must justify and save you.

Object. But, ' May not wicked men be willing to have Christ? And do not you oft tell us that justifying faith comprehends love to Christ and thankfulness, and that it receiveth him as a Lord to be obeyed, as well as a deliverer? And that repentance and sincere obedience are parts of the condition of the new covenant?'

Answer. I will give as brief a touch now on these as may be, because I have handled them in fitter places.

1. Wicked men are willing to have remission, justification, and freedom from hell (for no man can be willing to be unpardoned, or to be damned ;) but they are not willing to have Christ himself in that nature and office which he must be accepted ; that is, as an holy head and husband to save both from the guilt and power, and all defilement and abode of sin, and to rule them by his law, and guide them by his Spirit, and to make them happy by bringing them to God, that being without sin, they may be perfectly pleasing and amiable in his sight, and enjoy him for ever. Thus is Christ offered, and thus to be accepted of all that will be saved ; and thus no wicked man will accept him (but when he ceaseth to be wicked.) 2. To cut all the rest short in a word, I say, That in this fore-described willingness or acceptance, repentance, love, thankfulness, resolution to obey, are all contained, or nearly implied, as I have elsewhere manifested ; so that the heart of saving faith is this acceptance of Christ, or willingness to have him to justify, sanctify, guide, and govern you. Find but this willingness, and you find all the rest, whether you expressly see them or not. So much for that direction.

Direct. IX. Having thus far proceeded, in discovering and improving the general grounds of comfort, and then in discovering the nature of faith, which gives you right to the special mercies of the covenant following it ; your next work must be, ' To perform this condition by actual believing.'

Your soul stands in extreme need of a Saviour. God offereth you a Saviour in the Gospel. What then have you next to do but

to accept him? Believe that this offer is general, and therefore to you. And that Christ is not set to sale, nor doth God require you to bring a price in your hand, but only heartily and thankfully to accept of what he freely giveth you. This must be done before you fall on trying your graces to get assurance, for you must have grace before you can discover it; and this is the first proper special saving grace (as it compriseth that knowledge and assent which necessarily go before it.) This is not only the method for those that yet never believed, but also for them that have lost the sense of their faith, and so the sight of their evidence. Believe again, that you may know you do believe; or at least may possess an accepted Saviour. When God in the Gospel bids you take Jesus Christ, and beseecheth you to be reconciled to him, what will you say to him? If your heart answer, 'Lord I am willing, I will accept of Christ and be thankful;' why then the match is made between Christ and you, and the marriage-covenant is truly entered, which none can dissolve. If Christ were not first willing, he would not be the suitor, and make the motion; and if he be willing, and you be willing, what can break the match? If you will say, 'I cannot believe;' if you understand what you say, either you mean that you cannot believe the gospel is true, or else that you cannot be willing that Christ should be yours. If it be the former, and speak truly, then you are a flat infidel (yet many temptations to doubt of the truth of Scripture, a true believer may have, yea, and actual doubtings; but his faith prevaieth, and is victorious over them); but if you really doubt whether the Gospel be true, use God's means for the discovery of its truth. Read what I have written in the second part of my Book of Rest. I will undertake now more confidently than ever I did, to prove the truth of Scripture by plain, full, undeniable force of reason. But I suppose this is none of your case. If therefore when you say, that you cannot believe, you mean, that you cannot accept an offered Christ, or be willing to have him; then I demand, (1.) What is your reason? The will is led by the reason of the understanding. If you be not willing, there is something that persuades you to be unwilling. This reason must be from something real, or else upon a mistake, upon supposal of something that is not in being. If it be upon mistake, either it is that you be not convinced of Christ's willingness to be

yours ; and if you thought he did consent, you would consent willingly ; if this be it, you do truly believe while you think you do not ; for you do consent (and that is all on your part to make the match) and Christ doth certainly consent, though you do not understand it. In this case it concerneth you, to understand better the extent of the new covenant, and then you will be past doubt of the willingness of Christ, and see that wherever the match breaks, it is only for want of consent in men ; for Christ is the first suitor, and hath long ago in the covenant proclaimed his consent, to be the head and husband of every sinner, on condition they will but consent to be his.

If your mistake be from any false apprehension of the nature of Christ, as if he were not a sufficient Saviour, or were an enemy to your comfort, that he would do you more harm than good ; if these mistakes are prevalent, then you do not know Christ, and therefore must presently better study him in the Gospel, till you have prevailed over such ignorant and blasphemous conceits (but none of this I suppose is your case.)

If then the reason why you say you cannot believe, be from any thing that is really in Christ (and not upon mistake,) then it must be either from some dislike of his saving work, by which he would pardon you, and save you from damnation (but that is impossible, for you cannot be willing to be damned or unpardoned, till you lose your reason :) or else it is from a dislike of his work of sanctification, by which he would cleanse your heart and life, by saving you from your sinful nature and actions ; some grudging against Christ's holy and undefiled laws and ways will be in the best, while there is that flesh in them which lusteth against the Spirit, so that they cannot do the things they would. But if truly you have such a dislike of a sinless condition, through the love of any sin or creature, that you cannot be willing to have Christ to cure you, and cleanse you from that sin, and make you holy : I say, if this be true, in a prevailing degree, so that if Christ and holiness were offered you, you would not accept them, then it is certain you have not true faith. And in this case it is easily to discern, that your first work lieth not in getting comfort or ease to your troubled mind ; but in getting better conceits of Christ and a holy state and life, that so you may

be willing of Christ, as Christ is of you, and so become a true believer. And here I would not leave you at that loss as some do, as if there were nothing for you to do for the getting of faith ; for certainly God hath prescribed you means for that end. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God preached ;” Rom. x. 17. i. Therefore see that you wait diligently on this ordinance of God. Read the Scriptures daily, and search them to see whether you may not there find that holiness is better than sin. ii. And however some seducers may tell you, that wicked men ought not to pray, yet be sure that you lie on your knees before God, and importunately beg that he would open your eyes, and change your heart, and shew you so far the evil of sin, and the want and worth of Christ and holiness, that you may be unfeignedly glad to accept his offer.

Object. ‘ But the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.’

Answer. (1.) You must distinguish between wicked men, as actually wicked, and going on in the prosecution of their wickedness ; and wicked men, as they have some good in them, or are doing some good, or are attempting a return to God. (2.) You must distinguish between real prayer and seeming prayer. (3.) You must distinguish between full acceptance of prayer, when God delighteth in them, and an acceptance only to some particular end, not intimating the acceptance of the person with his prayer : and between acceptance fully promised (as certain) and acceptance but half promised (as probable). And upon these distinctions I shall answer your objections in the conclusion.

1. When wicked men pray to God to prosper them in their wickedness, yea, or to pardon them while they intend to go on in it, and so to give them an indulgence in sin ; or when they think with a few prayers for some good, which they can endure, to put by that holiness which they cannot endure, and so to make a cloak for their rebellion, these prayers are all an abomination to the Lord.

2. When men use the words of a prayer, without the desire of the thing asked, this is no prayer, but equivocally so called, as a carcase is a man ; and therefore no wonder if God abhor that prayer, which is truly no prayer.

3. God hath not made a full promise, ascertaining any wicked man, while wicked, that he will hear his prayer ; for all such promises are made to believers.

4. God doth never so hear an unbeliever's prayer, as to accept his person with his prayer, or to take a complacency in them. So much for the negative.

Nor for the affirmative, I add ; 1. Prayer is a duty which God enjoined even wicked men (I could prove it by an hundred Scripture texts.)

2. There may be some good desires in unbelievers, which they may express in prayer, and these God may so far hear as to grant them, as he did in part to Ahab.

3. An unbeliever may lie under preparing grace, and be on his way in returning towards God, though yet he be not come to saving faith ; and in this state he may have many good desires, and such prayers as God will hear.

4. Though God have not flatly engaged himself to unbelievers, so as to give them a certainty of hearing their prayers, and giving them true grace on the improvement of their naturals, yet he hath not only appointed them this and other means to get grace, but also given them half promises, or strong probabilities of speeding, so much as may be a sufficient encouragement to any such sinner to call on God, and use his means. For as he appointeth not any vain means to man, so no man can name that man who did improve his naturals to the utmost, and in particular, sought God in prayer, so far as a natural man may do, who yet missed of grace, and was rejected (this is the true mean between Pelagianism and Antinomianism in this point).

5. When God calls unbelievers to prayer, he withal calls them to believe. And when he works their heart to prayer by that call, he usually withal works them to believe, or at least towards believing. If he that was unwilling to have Christ, do pray God to make him willing, it is a beginning of willingness already, and the way to get more willingness. In prayer God useth to give in the thing prayed for, of this kind.

6. Prayer is the soul's motion God-ward : and to say an unbe-

liever should not pray, is to say he should not turn to God ; who yet saith to the wicked, " Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way ;" &c. Isaiah lv. 6, 7.

7. Prayer hath two parts ; desire is the soul of it, and expression is the body. The soul can live separated from the body, but so cannot the body separated from the soul. So can desire without expression, but not expression without desire. When our blind Antinomians (the great subverters of the Gospel, more than the law) do rail against ministers for persuading wicked men to pray, they are against us for persuading men to desire that they pray for ; prayer having desire for its soul. And do not those men deserve to be exterminated the churches and societies of the saints, who dare say to a wicked unbeliever, ' Desire not faith ? Desire not to leave thy wickedness ? Desire not grace ? or Christ ? or God ? And that will proclaim abroad the word (as I have oft heard of them with zealous reproaches) that our ministers are legalists, seducers, ignorant of the mysteries of the Gospel, because they persuade poor sinners to pray for faith, grace, and Christ ; that is to desire these, and to express their desires ; which in effect is to persuade them to repent, believe, and turn to God. Indeed, if these blind seducers had ever heard our ministers persuading wicked men to dissemble and lie to God, and ask faith, grace and Christ with their tongues, but not desire them in their hearts, then had they sufficient grounds for their reviling language. But I have been too long on this. I may therefore boldly conclude, that they that find themselves unbelievers, that is, unwilling to have Christ to deliver them from sin, must use this second means to get faith, even earnest frequent prayer for it to God.

iii. Let such also see that they avoid wicked seducing company and occasions of sin ; and be sure that they keep company with men fearing God, especially joining with them in their holy duties.

iv. Lastly, let such be sure that they use that reason which God hath given them, to consider frequently, retiredly, seriously, of the vanity of all those things that steal away their hearts from Christ ; and of the excellency of holiness, and how blessed a state it is to have nothing in us of heart or life that is displeasing to God, but to

be such as he taketh full delight in ; also of the certainty of the damnation of unbelievers, and the intolerableness of their torments ; and of the certainty and inconceivable greatness of believers' everlasting happiness. If wicked unbelievers would but do what they can in daily, serious, deep considering of these things, and the like, they would have no cause to despair of obtaining faith and sanctification. Believing is a rational act. God bids you not to believe any thing without reason, nor to accept or consent to any thing without full reason to cause you to consent. Think then often and soberly of those reasons that should move you to consent, and of the vanity of these that hinder you from consenting, and this is God's way for you to obtain faith or consent.

Remember then, that when you have understood and improved general grounds of comfort (nay before you can come to any full improvement of them) your next business is to believe ; to consent to the match with Christ, and to take him for your Lord and Saviour. And this duty must be looked to and performed, before you look after special comfort. But I said somewhat of this before under the sixth head, and therefore will say no more now.

Direct. X. When you have gone thus far, your soul is safe, and you are past your greatest dangers, though yet you are not past your fears ; your next work therefore for peace and comfort is this ; ' To review and take notice of your own faith, and thence to gather assurance of the certainty of your justification, and adoption, and right to glory.'

The sum of this direction lieth in these things :

1. See that you do not content yourself with the forementioned general comforts, without looking after assurance and special comforts. The folly of this I have manifested in the third part of my Book of Rest, about Self-examination.

2. See that you dream not of finding assurance and special comfort from mere general grounds. This is the delusion of many Antinomians, and most of our profane people (who I find are commonly of the Antinomian faith naturally, without teaching.) For men to conclude that they shall certainly be saved, merely because God is merciful, or Christ is tender-hearted to sinners, and would not that any should perish, but all should come to repentance ; or

because God delights not in the death of him that dieth, but rather that he repent and live ; or because Christ died for them ; or because God hath given Christ and life in the Gospel to all, on condition of believing ; these are all but mere delusions. Much comfort, as I have shewed you, may be gathered from these generals ; but no certainty of salvation, or special comfort can be gathered from them alone.

3. See that you reject the Antinomian doctrine or dotage, which would teach you to reject the trial and judging of your state by signs of grace in yourself, and tell you that it is only the Spirit that must assure, by witnessing your adoption ; I will further explain this caution when I have added the rest.

4. And on the other extreme, do not run to marks unseasonably, but in the order here laid down.

5. Nor trust to unsafe marks.

6. And therefore do not look at too many ; for the true ones are but few. I do but name these things to you, because I have more fully handled them in my Book of Rest, whither I must refer you. And so I return to the third caution.

I have in the forementioned book told you, what the office of the Spirit is in assuring us, and what the use of marks are. The Spirit witnesseth first objectively, and so the Spirit and marks are all one. For it is the Spirit dwelling in us that is the witness or proof that we are God's sons ; for he that hath not his Spirit is none of his. And the Spirit is not discerned by us in its essence, but in its workings ; and therefore to discern these workings, is to discern the Spirit, and these workings are marks that we speak of : so that the Spirit witnesseth our sonship, as a reasonable soul witnesseth that you are a man and not a beast. You find by the acts of reason, that you have a reasonable soul, and then you know, that having a reasonable soul, you certainly are a man. So you find by the works or fruits of the Spirit, that you have the Spirit (that is, by marks ; and Paul enumerates the fruits of the Spirit to that end,) and then by finding that you have the Spirit you may certainly know that you are the child of God. Also, as the reasonable soul is its own discernor by the help of the body (while it is in it) and so witnesseth our humanity effectively as well as objectively

(but first in order objectively, and next effectively;) so doth the Spirit effectively discover itself to the soul, by illuminating us to discern it, and exciting us to search, and giving us that spiritual taste and feeling of its workings, and so of its presence, by which it is best known. But still it witnesseth objectively, first, and its effective witnessing is but the causing us to discern its objective witness. Or (to speak more plainly,) the spirit witnesses first and principally, by giving us those graces and workings which are our marks; and then, secondly by helping us to find and feel those workings or marks in ourselves; and then, lastly, by raising comforts in the soul upon that discovery. Take heed therefore of expecting any such inward witness of the Spirit, as some expect, viz. a discovery of your adoption directly, without first discovering the signs of it within you, as if by an inward voice he should say to you, 'Thou art a child of God and thy sins are pardoned.'

This that I described to you, is the true witness of the Spirit. This mistake is so dangerous, that I had thought to have made it a peculiar direction by itself, to warn you of it; and now I have gone so far I will despatch it here. Two dangerous consequents I find do follow this unwarrantable expectation of the first immediate efficient revelation that we are adopted.

1. Some poor souls have languished in doubting and trouble of mind almost all their days, in expectation of such a kind of witness as the Spirit useth not to give; when in the meantime they have sufficient means of comfort, and knew not how to improve them; yea, they had the true witness of the Spirit in his inhabitation and holy workings, and did not know it; but run as Samuel did to Eli, not knowing the voice of God; and look for the Spirit's testimony when they had it, as the Jews for Elias and the Messias.

2. Others do more dangerously err, by taking the strong conceit of their own fantasy for the witness of the Spirit; as soon as they do but entertain the opinion that it must be such a witness of the Spirit, without the use of marks, that must assure men of their adoption, presently they are confident that they have the witness in themselves. It is scarce likely to be God's Spirit that is so ready upon the mere change of an opinion. The devil useth to do as much to cherish presumption, as to destroy true faith and assu-

rance. It is a shrewd sign that our persuasions of our truth of grace is a delusion, when we find the devil a friend to it, and helping it on. And it is a probable sign it is a good persuasion, when we find the devil an enemy to it, and still troubling us and endeavoring our disquiet.

And here I remember the scruple that troubleth some about the spirit of bondage, and the spirit of adoption. But you must understand, that by the spirit of bondage is meant that spirit, and those operations on the soul which the law of works did naturally beget in those that were under it; which was to be partly in bondage, to a task of ceremonious duties, and partly to the curse and obligation to punishment for disobedience, without any power to justify. They were said therefore to be in bondage to the law; and the law was said to be a yoke, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear: Acts xv.

And by the spirit of adoption is meant, 1. That spirit, or those qualifications or workings in their souls, which by the Gospel God giveth only to his sons. 2. And which raise in us some childlike affections to God inclining us in all our wants to run to him in prayer, as to a Father, and to make our moan to him, and open our griefs, and cry for redress, and look to him, and depend on him as a child on the father. This spirit of adoption you may have, and yet not be certain of God's special love to you. The knowledge only of his general goodness and mercy, may be a means to raise in you true childlike affections. You may know God to have fatherly inclinations to you, and yet doubt whether he will use you as a child, for want of assurance of your own sincerity. And you may hope God is your Father, when yet you may apprehend him to be a displeased, angry father, and so he may be more your terror than your comfort. Are you not ready in most of your fears, and doubts, and troubles, to go to God before all other for relief? And doth not your heart sigh and groan to him, when you can scarcely speak? Doth not your troubled spirit there find its first vent? And say, 'Lord kill me not; forsake me not; my life is in thy hands; O soften this hard heart; make this carnal mind more spiritual! O be not such a stranger to my soul! Wo to me that I am so ignorant of thee! so disaffected to thee! so backward and disinclined

to holy communion with thee ! Wo to me, that can take no more pleasure in thee ! and am so mindless and disregardful of thee ! O that thou wouldst stir up in me more lively desires, and workings of my soul towards thee ! and suffer me not to lie at such a distance from thee !' Are not such as these the breathings of your spirit ? Why these are childlike breathings after God ! This is crying ' Abba, Father.' This is the work of the spirit of adoption, even when you fear God will cast you off. You much mistake (and those that tell you so) if you think that the spirit of adoption lieth only in a persuasion that you are God's child, or that you may not have the spirit of adoption, without such a persuasion of God's adopting you. For God may adopt you, and give you that spirit which he gives only to his children, and possess you with true filial affections towards him, before ever you know yourself to be adopted ; much more, though you may have frequent returning doubts of your adoption.

Having thus shewed you how far you may expect the witness of the Spirit, and how far you may and must make use of marks and qualifications, or actions of your own, for the obtaining of assurance and settled peace, I shall add an answer to the principal objections of the Antinomians against this.

Object. They say, This is to draw men from Christ to themselves, and from the gospel to the law ; to lay their comforts, and build their peace upon any thing in themselves, is to forsake Christ, and make themselves their own saviors : and those teachers that persuade them to this, are teachers of the law, and false prophets, who draw men from Christ to themselves. All our own righteousness is as filthy rags, and our best works are sin ; and therefore we may not take up our assurance or comforts from them. We shall be always at uncertainties, and at a loss, or inconstant, up and down in our comforts, as long as we take them from any signs in ourselves : also our own graces are imperfect, and therefore unfit to be the evidences for our assurance.

Ans. Because I am not now purposely confuting the Antinomians, but only forearming you against their assaults ; I shall not therefore give you half that I should otherwise say, for the explication of this point, and the confutation of their errors, but only so

much as is necessary to your preservation : which I do, because they pretend to be the only preachers of free grace, and the only right comforters of troubled consciences ; and because they have written so many books to that end, which if they fall into your hands may seem so specious, as that you may need some preservative. I suppose you remember what I have taught you so oft, concerning the difference of the law of works, and the law of grace, with their different conditions. Upon which supposition I explicate the point thus. 1. No man may look at his own graces or duties as his legal righteousness ; that is, such as for which the law of works will pronounce him righteous. 2. Nor yet may he take them for part of his legal righteousness, in conjunction with Christ's righteousness, as the other part ; but here we must go wholly out of ourselves, and deny and disclaim all such righteousness of our own. We have no works which make the reward to be not of grace but of debt. 3. We must not once think that our graces, duties, or sufferings, can make satisfaction to God's justice for our sin and unrighteousness ; nor yet that they are any part of that satisfaction. Here we ascribe all to Christ, who is the only sacrifice and ransom. 4. Nor must we think that our duties or graces are properly meritorious ; this also is to be left as the sole honor of Christ. 5. Yet that we may and must raise our assurance and comforts from our own graces and duties, shall appear in these clear reasons following, which shew also the grounds on which we may do it.

1. Pardon, justification, and adoption, and salvation, are all given to us in the Gospel only conditionally (if we believe), and the condition is an act, or rather several acts of our own. Now till the condition be performed, no man can have any certainty that the benefit shall be his, nor can he by any other means (ordinarily) be certain of the benefit, but by that which ascertains him that he hath performed the condition. God saith, "He that believeth shall be saved." No man can know then that he shall be saved, till he first know that he believeth. Else he should know either contrary to that which is written, or more than that which is written ; and justification and adoption should be given some other way than by the gospel promise, for that promise giveth them only conditionally, and so suspendeth the actual right, upon the performance of the condi-

tion. But if any can shew any other way, by which God maketh over pardon and adoption, besides the gospel promise, let them do it ; but I will not promise suddenly to believe them, for it was never yet shewed as I know of. Also, if men must not look at their own performance of the condition, to prove their right to the benefit, then either all or none must believe that they have that right ; for the promise saith, " He that believeth shall be saved." And this is a promise of life conditionally to all. If all must believe that they shall be saved, then most of the world must believe a lie. If the true believer may not therefore conclude that he shall be saved, because he performeth the condition of the promise, then no man may believe it. And for that absolute promise of the new heart, no man can, or may believe that it is his, till he have that new heart which it promiseth ; that is, till it be fulfilled. For there is no mark by which a man can know whether that promise belong to him or no beforehand, and if all should believe that it belongs to them, most would find it false.

2. God hath not redeemed us by his Son to be lawless. To be without law is to be without government. We are without the law ; that is, of works or of Moses, but not without law ; Jesus Christ is our ruler, and he hath made us a law of grace ; an easy yoke, and commands that are not grievous. This law hath precepts, promises and threats ; it must needs be either obeyed or disobeyed ; and so the penalty must be due or not due ; and the reward due or not due. He that performs the condition, and so to whom the reward is due, and not the penalty, is righteous in the sense of this law. As when we are accused to be sinners against the law of works, and so to deserve the penalty of that law, we must confess all, and plead the righteousness of Christ's satisfaction for our justification. So when we are accused to be final unbelievers or impenitent, and so not to have performed the conditions of the new covenant, we must be justified by our own faith and repentance, the performance of that condition ; and must plead not guilty. And so far our own acts are our evangelical righteousness, and that of such necessity, that without it no man can have part in Christ's righteousness, nor be saved. I would desire any man else to tell me, what else he will plead at judgment, when the accuser

chargeth him (or if he do so charge him) with final unbelief? Will he confess it, and say, 'Christ hath believed and repented for me?' That is as much as to say, 'Christ was a believer for infidels; that he might save infidels.' All false. If he will not say thus (and lying will do no good) then must he plead his own believing and repenting, as his righteousness, in opposition to that accusation. And if it be of such use then, and be called a hundred times in scripture, "our righteousness," and we righteous for it, then doubtless we may accordingly try by it now, whether we shall then be able to come off and be justified, or no; and so may build our comfort on it.

3. Conscience is a witness and judge within us, and doth, as under God, accuse and condemn, or excuse and acquit. Now if conscience must absolve us only so far as we are innocent, or do well, or are qualified with grace, then it is impossible but these our qualifications and actions should be some ground of our comfort. See Acts xxiv. 16. xxiii. 1. Rom. ii. 15, 16.

4. Those which are our graces and works, as we are the subjects and agents, are the graces and works of God, of Christ, of the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. If therefore we may not rejoice in our own works, or graces, then we may not rejoice in the works or gifts of God, Christ, or the Holy Ghost. And,

5. Our graces are the spiritual life or health of the soul, and our holy actions are the vital operations. Now life and health are necessary; rejoicing, delighting things of themselves; and vital actions are necessarily pleasant and delectable.

6. Our graces and holy actions must needs rejoice us in respect of their objects; for the object of our love, trust, hope, meditation, prayer, conference, &c. is God himself, and the Lord Jesus, and the joys of heaven. And how can such actions choose but rejoice us!

7. Yea, rejoicing itself, and delighting ourselves in God is not only one part of our duty, but that great duty wherein lieth the height of our Christianity. And how vain a speech is it to say, that we may not take up our comforts from our own works, nor rejoice in any thing of our own; when even rejoicing itself, and delighting, and comforting ourselves, is one part of our duty?

8. As God in Christ is the chief object and ground of our com

fort (so that we must rejoice in nothing but God, and the cross of Christ, in that kind, or in co-ordination with them ;) so it is the office of every grace and holy work, and ordinance, and means, to be subservient to Christ, either for the attaining of Christ, or applying his merits, or they are the effects of his merits. Now if we must love and rejoice in Christ principally, then must we needs love and rejoice in all those things that stand in a necessary subordination to him, in their places. And therefore to say, 'We must rejoice in Christ only, and therefore not in any graces or duties of our own,' is as wise, as if a wife should cast her husband's clothes and meat out of doors and say, 'You charged me to admit none into my chamber but yourself.' Or as if a physician, having told his patients, 'I will cure you, if you will trust me only for the cure;' thereupon the patients should cast away his medicines, and shut the doors against his servants and apothecaries, and say, 'We must trust none but the physician.'

9. All the failings of our duties are pardoned, and they accepted in Christ ; and therefore we may rejoice in them.

10. Our duties have a double tendency to our salvation. (1.) As the condition to which God hath promised it as the crown and reward (in a hundred texts of Scripture,) and may we not comfort ourselves in that which God promiseth heaven to ? (2.) As a natural means to our obedience and further protection (as watchfulness, meditation, &c. tend to destroy sin,) as Paul saith to Timothy, "Take heed to thyself, and to thy doctrine, and in so doing, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee ;" 1 Tim. iv. 16. and may we not take comfort in that which tends to save our own and our brethren's souls ?

11. We shall be judged according to our works ; therefore we must judge ourselves according to our works ; and so must judge our state good or bad, according to our works. For can man judge by a righter way than God will ? At least is it not lawful for man to judge as God doth ?

12. We must judge of others in probability, according to their external works, even the tree by the fruits ; therefore we must judge of ourselves in certainty, according to our internal and external works together, which we may certainly know.

13. If we may not rejoice in any of our graces, then we may not be thankful for them, for thankfulness is accompanied with joy ; but we must be thankful.

14. If we may not rejoice in our duties, we may not repent or sorrow for the neglect of them ; and if we may not rejoice in our graces, we may not lament the want of them (for these are as the two ends of the balance, that one goes down when the other goes up ; or as day and night, light and darkness.) But the consequent is intolerable.

15. This would overthrow all religion. For what a man cannot rejoice in, he cannot love, he cannot esteem, regard, be careful to obtain, be fearful of losing, &c.

16. God delighteth in our graces and holy duties, and is well pleased with them ; and therefore it is lawful and needful that we do as God doth ; Jer. ix. 24. Heb. xi. 5. Abel's sacrifice by faith obtained testimony that he pleased God. "To do good, and to communicate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased ;" Heb. xiii. 16.

17. The saints of God have not only tried themselves by their graces and duties, and commanded others to try by them, but have gloried and rejoiced in their duties and sufferings. "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our conversation among you ;" 2 Cor. i. 12. "They gloried that they were counted worthy to suffer for Christ ;" Acts v. 41. "I have therefore whereof I may glory in Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God ;" Rom. xv. 17. "We glory in tribulation," &c. ; chap. v. 3. "Though I should desire to glory, I should not be a fool. I glory in mine infirmities ;" 2 Cor. xii. 6. 9. "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me ; Jer. ix. 24. "I had rather die than any should make my glorying void ;" 1 Cor. ix. 15. "Let every man prove his own work, so shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another ;" Gal. vi. 4.

18. Scripture nameth many of our own graces and duties, as the certain marks of our justification and right to glory. Even Christ with his own mouth, gives us many ; "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also ;" Matt. vi. 21. "He that doth

evil hateth the light," &c. John iii. 19. Matt. v. is full of such ;
 " Blessed are the poor in spirit, the pure in heart," &c. &c.

19. We may rejoice in other men's good works and graces (and do, if we be true Christians,) therefore in our own.

20. We may rejoice in God's outward mercies ; therefore much more in inward, and such as accompany salvation. All these arguments prove, that we may take up our comfort from our own graces, qualifications and actions (not in opposition to Christ, but in subordination to him,) and most of them prove that we may fetch our assurance of salvation from them, as undoubted evidences thereof.

I have said the more in answer to these objections, (1.) Because never any came with fairer pretences of exalting Christ, and maintaining the honor of his righteousness and free grace, and of denying ourselves and our own righteousness. (2.) And yet few doctrines more dishonor Christ, and destroy the very substance of religion. Even as if a man should cry down him that would praise and commend obedience to the king, and say, ' You must praise nothing but the king. ... So do these cry down our looking up, and rejoicing in our love to Christ, and our thankfulness to him, and our obedience, and all under pretence of honoring him. Nay, they will not have us rejoice in one part of Christ's salvation (his saving us from the power of sin, and his sanctifying us) under pretence that we dishonor the other part of his salvation (his justifying us.) If ever Satan transformed himself into an angel of light, and his ministers into ministers of light, it is in the mistakes of the Antinomians ; and no people in the world (except carnal libertines, whom this doctrine fits to a hair are in more danger of them, than poor, doubting Christians, under trouble of conscience ; especially if they be not judicious, and skilled in the doctrine of Christ. For the very pretence of extolling Christ and free grace, will take much with such ; and any new way will sometimes seem to give them comfort, upon the very novelty and sudden change.

Having thus proved that you may, and must fetch your special comfort and assurance from evidences, and that your first evidence is your faith, I shall open this more fully under the next Direction.

Direct. XI. In the trial of your state, ' Be sure that you make

use of infallible signs of sincerity, and take not those for certain which are not.¹

And to that end remember what I said before, that you must well understand wherein the nature of saving faith, and so of all saving grace doth consist. And when you understand this, write it down in two or three lines ; and both at your first trial, and afterward, whenever any doubts do drive you to a review of your evidence, still have recourse only to those signs, and try by them. What these signs are, I have shewed you so fully in the forecited place in my Book of Rest, that I shall say but little now. Remember that infallible signs are very few ; and that whatsoever is made the condition of salvation, that is the most infallible evidence of our salvation, and therefore the fittest mark to try by ; and therefore faith in God the Father and the Redeemer, is the main evidence. But because I have elsewhere shewed you, that this faith is comprehensive of love, gratitude, resolution to obey, and repentance, let me more particularly open it to help you in the trial. To prove any grace to be saving, it is necessary that you prove that salvation is fully promised to him that hath it. Now if you will know what it is that hath this promise, I will tell you, 1. As to the object. 2. The act. 3. The degree or modification of the act. For all these three must be inquired after if you will get assurance. 1. The object is principally God, and the Redeemer Christ. And secondarily the benefits given by Christ ; and under that, the means to attain the principal benefits, &c. 2. The act hath many names drawn from respective and moral differences in the object, as faith, desire, love, choosing, accepting, receiving, consenting, &c. But properly all are comprised in one word, 'willing.' The understanding's high estimation of God, and Christ, and grace, is a principal part of true saving grace ; but yet it is difficult, and scarce possible to judge of yourself by it rightly, but only as it discovers itself by prevailing with the will. 3. The degree of this act must be such, as ordinarily prevaieth against its contrary ; I mean, both the contrary object, and the contrary act to the same object. But because I doubt school-terms do obscure my meaning to you though they are necessary for exactness,) I will express the nature of saving grace in two or three marks as plain as I can.

mak. And you heartily willing to take God for your portion? And had you rather live with him in glory in his favor and fullest love, with a soul perfectly cleansed from all sin, and never more to offend him, rejoicing with his saints in his everlasting praises, than to enjoy the delights of the flesh on earth, in a way of sin and without the favor of God?

711. H. Are you heartily willing to take Jesus Christ as he is offered in the Gospel? that is, to be your only Saviour, and Lord, to give you pardon by his bloodshed, and to sanctify you by his word and Spirit, and to govern you by his law?

sh. Because this general containeth and implieth several particulars, I will express them distinctly.

712. Here it is supposed that you know this much following of the nature of his laws. For to be willing to be ruled by his laws in general, and utterly unwilling when it comes to particulars, is no true willingness or subjection. 1. You must know that his laws reach both to heart and outward actions. 2. That they command a holy, spiritual, heavenly life. 3. That they command things so cross and unpleasant to the flesh, that the flesh will be still murmuring and striving against obedience. Particularly, (1.) They command things quite cross to the inclinations of the flesh; as to forgive wrongs, to love enemies, to forbear malice and revenge, to restrain and mortify lust and passion, to abhor and mortify pride, and be low in our own eyes, and humble and meek in spirit. (2.) They command things that cross the interest of the flesh and its inclination both together; I mean which will deprive it of its enjoyments, and bring it to some suffering? As to perform duties even when they lay us open to disgrace and shame, and reproach in the world; and to deny our credit, rather than forsake Christ or our duty. To obey Christ in doing what he commandeth us, though it would hazard or certainly lose our wealth, friends, liberty and life itself; forsaking all rather than to forsake him; to give to the poor, and other good uses, and that liberally, according to our abilities. To deny the flesh all forbidden pleasures, and make not provisions to satisfy its lusts, but to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof; and in this combat to hold on to the end, and to overcome. These are the laws of Christ, which you must know, before you

can determine whether you are indeed unfeignedly willing to obey them. Put therefore these further questions to yourself, for the trial of your willingness to be ruled by Christ according to his laws.

III. Are you heartily willing to live in the performance of those holy and spiritual duties of heart and life, which God hath absolutely commanded you? And are you heartily sorry that you perform them no better? With no more cheerfulness, delight, success, and constancy?

IV. Are you so thoroughly convinced of the worth of everlasting happiness, and the intolerableness of everlasting misery, and the truth of both; and of the sovereignty of God the Father, and Christ the Redeemer, and your many engagements to him; and of the necessity and good of obeying, and the evil of sinning, that you are truly willing, that is, have a settled resolution to cleave to Christ, and obey him in the dearest, most disgraceful, painful, hazardous, flesh-displeasing duties; even though it should cost you the loss of all your worldly enjoyments, and your life?

V. Doth this willingness or resolution already so far prevail in your heart and life, against all the interest and temptations of the world, the devil, and your flesh, that you do ordinarily practise the most strict and holy, the most self-denying, costly, and hazardous duties that you know God requireth of you, and do heartily strive against all known sin, and overcome all gross sins; and when you fall under any prevailing temptation, do rise again by repentance, and begging pardon of God, through the blood of Christ, do resolve to watch and resist more carefully for the time to come?

In these five marks is expressed the Gospel-description of a true Christian.

Having laid down these marks, I must needs add a few words for the explaining of some things in them, lest you mistake the meaning, and so lose the benefit of them.

i. Observe that it is your willingness, which is the very point to be tried. And therefore, 1. Judge not by your bare knowledge. 2. Judge not by the stirring or passionate workings of your affections. I pray you forget not this rule in any of your self-examinings. It is the heart that God requireth. "My son, give me thy heart;" Prov. xxiii. 26. If he hath the will, he hath the heart.

He may have much of our knowledge, and not our heart. But when we know him so thoroughly as to will him unfeignedly, then he hath our heart. Affectionate workings of the soul to God in Christ, are sweet things, and high and noble duties and such as all Christians should strive for. But they are not the safest marks to try our states by. (1.) Because there may be a solid, sincere intention and choice in and of the will, where there is little stirring perceived of the affections. (2.) Because the will is the master-commanding faculty of the rational soul; and so if it be right, that man is upright and safe. (3.) Because the passions and affections are so mutable and uncertain. The will can command them but imperfectly; it cannot perfectly restrain them from vanities; much less can it perfectly raise them to that height, as is suitable to the excellency of our heavenly objects. But the object itself, with its sensible manner of apprehension, moves them more than all the command of the will. And so we find by experience, that a godly man, when with his utmost private endeavor, he cannot command one stirring pang of divine love or joy in his soul, yet upon the hearing of some moving sermon, or the sudden receiving of some extraordinary mercy, or the reading of some quickening book, he shall feel perhaps some stirring of that affection. So when we cannot weep in private one tear for sin, yet at a stirring sermon, or when we give vent to our sorrows, and ease our troubled hearts into the bosom of some faithful friend, then we can find tears. (4.) Because passions and affections depend so much on the temperature of the body. To one they are easy, familiar, and at command; to another (as honest) they are difficult and scarce stirred at all. With most women, and persons of weaker tempers, they are easier than with men. Some cannot weep at the death of a friend, though never so dear, no, nor perhaps feel very sensible, inward grief; and yet perhaps would have redeemed his life at a far dearer rate (had it been possible) than those that can grieve and weep more abundantly. (5.) Because wordly things have so great an advantage on our passions and affections. 1. They are sensible and near us, and our knowledge of them is clear. But God is not to be seen, heard, or felt by our senses, he is far from us, though locally present with us; we are capable of knowing but little, very

little of him. 2. Earthly things are always before our eyes, their advantage is continual. 3. Earthly things being still the subjects of our senses, do force our passions, whether we will or not, though they cannot force our wills. (6.) Because affections and passions rise and fall, and neither are nor can be in any even and constant frame, and therefore are unfit to be the constant or certain evidence of our state; but the will's resolution, and choice may be more constant. So that I advise you rather to try yourself by your will, than by your passionate stirrings of love or longing, of joy or sorrow.

Objec. 'But doth not the Scripture lay as much on love, as on any grace? And doth not Christ say, That except we love him above all, we cannot be his disciples?'

Ans. It is all very true. But consider, love hath two parts; the one in the will, which is commonally called a faculty of the soul, as rational; and this is the same thing that I call willing, accepting, choosing, or consenting. This complacency is true love to Christ; and this is the sure standing mark. The other is the passionate part, commonly said to be in the soul, as sensitive; and this, though most commonly called love, yet is less certain and constant, and so unfitter to try your state by, though a great duty, so far as we can reach it.

ii. You must understand and well remember, that it is not every willingness that will prove your sincerity: for wicked men may have slight apprehensions of spiritual things, which may produce some slight desires and wishes, which are yet so feeble and heartless, that every lust and carnal desire overcomes them; and it will not so much as enable them to deny the grossest sin. But it must be the prevalent part of your will that God must have. I mean a great share, a deeper and larger room than any thing in the world; that is, you must have a higher estimation of God, and everlasting happiness, and Christ, and a holy life, than of any thing in the world; and also your will must be so disposed hereby, and inclined to God, that if God and glory, to be obtained through Christ, a holy, self-denying life, were set before you on the one hand, and the pleasure, profits, and honors of the world to be enjoyed in a wicked sin, on the other hand, you would resolvedly

take the former, and refuse the latter. Indeed they are thus set before you, and upon your choice dependeth your salvation or damnation, though that choice must come from the grace of God.

iii. Yet must you well remember, that this willingness and choice is still imperfect, and therefore when I mention a hearty willingness, I mean not a perfect willingness. There may be, and is in the most gracious souls on earth, much indisposedness, backwardness, and withdrawing of heart, which is too great a measure of unwillingness to duty; especially to these duties which the flesh is most averse from, and which require most of God and his Spirit to the right performance of them.

Among all duties, I think the soul is naturally most backward to these following. 1. To secret prayer, because it is spiritual, and requires great reverence, and hath nothing of external pomp or form to take us up with, and consisteth not much in the exercise of common gifts, but in the exercise of special grace, and the breathings of the Spirit, and searchings, pantings, and strivings of a gracious soul towards God. (I do not speak of the heartless repeating of bare words, learned by rote, and either not understood, or not uttered from the feeling of the soul.) 2. To serious meditation also is the soul very backward; that is, either to meditate on God, and the promised glory, or any spiritual subject, to this end that the heart may be thereby quickened and raised, and graces exercised (though to meditate on the same subject, only to know or dispute on it, the heart is nothing near so backward;) or else to meditate on the state of our own hearts, by way of self-examination, or self-judging, or self-reprehension, or self-exciting. 3. Also to the duty of faithful dealing with each other's souls, in secret reproof and exhortation, plainly (though lovingly) to tell each other of our sins and danger, to this the heart is usually very backward; partly through a sinful bashfulness, partly for want of more believing, lively apprehensions of our duty, and our brother's danger. and partly because we are loath to displease men and lose their favor, it being grown so common for men to fall out with those (if not hate them) that deal plainly and faithfully with them. 4. Also to take reproof, as well as to give it, the heart is very backward. Even godly men, through the sad remainders of their sinfulness, do

too commonly frown, and snarl, and retort our reproofs, and study presently how to excuse themselves, and put it by, or how to charge us with something that may stop our mouths, and make the reprover seem as bad as themselves. Though they dare not tread our reproofs under feet, and turn again, and all to rend us, yet they oft shew the remnants of a dogged nature, though when they review their ways it costs them sorrow. We must sugar and butter our words, and make them liker to stroking than striking, liker an approving than a reproving them, liker a flattery than faithful dealing, and yet when we have all done, they go down very hardly, and that but half way, even with many godly people when they are under a temptation. 5. The like may be said of all those duties which do pinch upon our credit or profit, or tend to disgrace us, or impoverish us in the world; as the confessing of a disgraceful fault; the free giving to the poor or sacred uses, according to our estates; the parting with our own right or gain for peace; the patient suffering of wrong, and forgiving it heartily, and loving bitter, abusive enemies, especially the running upon the stream of men's displeasure, and incurring the danger of being utterly undone in our worldly state (especially if men be rich, who do therefore as hardly get to heaven as a camel through a needle's eye;) and above all, the laying down of our lives for Christ. It cannot be expected, that godly men should perform all these with perfect willingness; the flesh will play its part, in pleading its own cause, and will strive hard to maintain its own interests. O the chief contradictions thatments, or at least the clamour in the best, so far as they are renewed, all these duties ^{will} ^{be} ^{our} ^{graces} weak! So that you may well hence conclude that you are a sinner, but you may not conclude that you are graceless, because of a backwardness and some unwillingness to duty.

Yet your willingness must be greater than your unwillingness, and so Christ must have the prevailing part of your will; and from that the denomination is usually taken. So that Scripture useth to affirm God's people to be willing even when they fail in the execution. So Paul (Rom. vii. 18.) saith, "To will is present with me, when how to do or perform he found not;" that is, not to obey so perfectly as he would do; not to love God so intensely

and fervently; not to subdue passions and lusts so thoroughly; not to watch our thoughts, and words, and ways so narrowly, and order them so exactly, as the bent of his will did consent to. And lest any Arminian should pretend (as they do) that Paul speaks here in the person of an unregenerate man, as under the convictions of the law, and not as a man regenerate; it is plain in the text that he speaks of himself in the state which he was then in, and that the state was a regenerate state. He expressly saith, it is thus, and thus with me; "So then I myself with my mind do serve the law of God, but with my flesh do serve the law of sin;" ver. 25. And to put it out of doubt, the apostle speaks the like of all christians, Gal. v. 17. "For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." This is the plain exposition of Rom. vii. Here scripture maketh the godly willing to do more than they do or can do, but yet it is not a perfect willingness, but it is the prevailing inclination and choice of the will, and that gives the name.

iv. Observe further, that I add your actual performance of duty; because true hearty willingness will shew itself in actions and endeavors. It is but dissembling, if I should say I am willing to perform the strictest, holiest duties, and yet do not perform them; to say I am willing to pray, and pray not; or to give to the poor, and give not; or to perform the most self-denying costly duties, and ~~not~~ ^{not} come to the practice, I will not be persuaded or drawn to them, ~~cost~~ ^{cost} a disgraceful sin, nor further a good cause to my danger, nor submit to reproof, nor turn from the way of temptation ^{like}; nor reprove, like. Action must discover true willingness. The son that said to his father, "I go, Sir," but went not to labor in the vineyard, was not accepted or justified. If therefore you are in doubt whether your willingness be sincere, inquire into your practice, and performance. God commandeth you to pray, to instruct your family, to be merciful to the poor, to forgive those that wrong you, &c. The flesh and the devil persuade you from these. Do you perform them, or do you not? Though you may do it with backwardness and dulness, and weakness, yet do you do it? And desire you

could do it better, and lament your misdoing it? And endeavor to do it better than you have formerly done? This shews then that the Spirit prevaieth, though the flesh do contradict it.

v. Yet here you must carefully distinguish of duties; for God hath made some to be secondary parts of the condition of the covenant, and so of flat necessity for the continuance of our justification, and for the attaining of glorification. Such are confessing Christ before men when we are called to it; confessing sin, praying, shewing mercy to the poor, forgiving wrongs, hearing and yielding to God's word, &c. still supposing that there be opportunity and necessities for the performance of these. But some duties there are that God hath not laid so great a stress or necessity on, though yet the wilful resolved omission in ordinary, of any known duty, is contrary to the nature of true obedience.

Also, the case may much differ with several persons, places and seasons, concerning duty; that may be a duty to one man, that is not to another; and at one place which is not at another; and at one season, which is not at another. And that may be a greater duty, and of indispensable necessity to one, which to another is not so great. It may stand with true grace, to omit that duty which men know not to be a duty, or not to be so to them (except where the duty is such, as is itself of absolute necessity to salvation;) but it cannot so stand with grace in those that know it, ordinarily to reject it.

vi. Also you must understand, that when I say, that true willingness to be ruled by Christ, will shew itself in actual obedience; I do not mean it of every particular individual act which is our duty, as if you should judge yourself graceless for every particular omission of a duty; no, though you knew it to be a duty; and though you considered it to be a duty. For, 1. There may be a true habituated inclination and willingness to obey Christ rooted in the heart, when yet by the force of a temptation, the actual prevalency of it at that time, in that act, may be hindered and suppressed. 2. And at the same time, you do hold on in a course of obedience in other duties. 3. And when the temptation is overcome, and grace hath been roused up against the flesh, and you soberly recollect your thoughts, you will return to obedience in that duty also.

Yea, how many days, or weeks, or months, a true Christian may possibly neglect a known duty, I will not dare to determine, (of which more anon.) Yet such omissions as will not stand with a sincere resolution and willingness to obey Christ universally (I mean an habitual willingness) will not consist with the truth of grace.

vii. I know the fourth mark, about forsaking all for Christ, may seem somewhat unseasonable and harsh to propound for the quieting of a troubled conscience. But yet, I durst not omit it, seeing Christ hath not omitted it; nay, seeing he hath so urged it, and laid such a stress on it in the Scripture as he hath done, I dare not daub, nor be unfaithful, for fear of troubling. Such skinning over the wound will but prepare for more trouble and a further cure. Christ thought it meet even to tell young beginners of the worst, (though it might possibly discourage them, and did turn some back) that they might not come to him upon mistaken expectations, and he requireth all that will be Christians, and be saved, to count their cost beforehand, and reckon what it will stand them in to be Christ's disciples; and if they cannot undergo his terms (that is, to deny themselves, take up their cross, forsake all and follow him) they cannot be his disciples. And Christ had rather they knew it beforehand, than to deceive themselves, or to turn back when they meet with what they never thought of, and then to imagine that Christ had deceived them, and drawn them in, and done the wrong.

vii. When I say in the fourth mark, that you must have a settled resolution, I mean the same thing as before I did by hearty willingness. But it is meeter here to call it resolution, because this is the proper name for that act of the will, which is a determination of itself upon deliberation, after any wavering, to the doing or submitting to any thing as commanded. I told you it must be the prevailing act of the will that must prove you sincere: every cold ineffectual wish will not serve turn. Christ seeks for your heart on one side, and the world with its pleasures, profits, and honors on the other side. The soul, which upon consideration of both, doth prefer Christ in his choice, and reject the world (as it is competitor with him) and this not doubtingly and with reservation for further deliberation or trial, but presently passeth his consent for better and

worse, this is said to be a resolving. And I know no one word that more fitly expresseth the nature of that grace which differenceth a true Christian from all hypocrites, and by which a man may safely judge of his estate.

ix. Yet I here add, that it must be a settled resolution ; and that to intimate, that it must be an habitual willingness or resolution. The prevalency of Christ's interest in the soul must be an habitual prevalency. If a man that is terrified by a rousing sermon, or that lieth in expectation of present death, should actually resolve to forsake sin, or perform duty, without any further change of mind, or habit, or fixedness of this resolution, it would be of no great value, and soon extinguished. Though yet I believe that no unsanctified man doth ever attain to that full resolution for Christ, which hath a complacency in Christ accompanying it, and which may be termed the prevailing part of the will. Those that seem resolved to day to be for Christ, and to deny the world and the flesh, and the next day are unresolved again, have cause to suspect that they were never truly resolved. Though the will of a godly man may lie under declinings in the degrees of resolution, yet Christ hath always his habitual resolutions, and usually his actual in a prevalent degree.

x. I add also the grounds (in the fourth mark) on which this resolution must be raised. For false grounds in the understanding will not bear up a true resolution in the will. And therefore we put the articles of our creed before our profession of consent and obedience. Sound doctrine and sound belief of it breeds a sound resolution, and makes a sound heart and life. If a man resolve to obey Christ, upon a conceit that Christ will never put him upon any suffering (else he would not resolve it) and that he will give him such brutish pleasures when he is dead, as Mahomet hath promised to his disciples, this resolution were not sound, yet in many lesser points of doctrine a true Christian may be unsound, and yet soundly cleave to the foundation. He may build hay and stubble possibly ; but the foundation must be held.

xi. Observe well (lest you mistake me) that I speak only of the necessity of your present resolving to forsake all for Christ, if he call you to it ; but I speak not of your absolute promise or prediction, that eventually you shall not deny or forsake him. You may

be uncertain how you shall be upheld in a day of trial, and yet you may now be resolved or fully purposed in your own mind what to do. To say, 'I will not consent, purpose or resolve, unless I were certain to perform my resolutions, and not to flag or change again;' this is but to say, 'I will be no Christian, unless I were sure to persevere. I will not be married to Christ, lest I should be drawn to break my covenant with him.'

xii. Also observe, that when I speak of your resolving to forsake all for Christ, it is not to cast away your state or life, but to submit it to his dispose, and to relinquish it only in case that he command you so.

xiii. And I do not intend that you should be able thus to resolve of yourself without the special grace of God; nor yet without it to continue those resolutions, much less to perform them by actual suffering.

Object. 'But I cannot be sure that God will give me grace to persevere, or at least not to deny him, as Peter did; and therefore I should neither promise nor resolve what I cannot be certain to perform.'

Ans. 1. I suppose you have read the many Scriptures and arguments which our divines ordinarily use to prove that the true believers shall not fall quite away. And I know not how the opposers can answer that text which themselves use to allege for the contrary; Matt. xiii. 6. 21. Those that believe for a time, and in the time of persecution fall away, it is because the seed had not depth of earth, the word never took rooting in their hearts. Whence it seems that it may be well inferred, that those shall not fall away in time of temptation, in whom the word of God hath taken deep rooting. And that is, in them in whose hearts or wills Christ hath a stronger interest than the creature, or those that have a well-grounded, unreserved, habituated or settled resolution to be for Christ. 2. However, your present resolution, and your covenanting with Christ, is no more but this; to say, 'I do consent;' or 'This I am resolved to do, by the help of God's grace.' 3. Else no man should be baptized or become a Christian, because he is uncertain to keep his covenants: for all that are baptized, do covenant and vow, "to forsake the world, flesh, devil," and fight under

Christ's banner to their lives' end. Understand me therefore, that you are not to promise to do this by your own strength, but by the strength of Christ, as knowing that he hath promised his Spirit and grace for the aid of every true believer.

xiv. If your resolution at present be hearty, you ought not to vex and disquiet your mind, with doubtful tormenting fears what you should do, if you be put to it to forsake all, and suffer death for Christ, for he hath promised to lay no more on us than we can bear, but with the temptation will make us a way to come forth ; 1 Cor. x. 13 ; either he will not bring us into trials beyond our strength ; or else he will increase our strength according to our trials. He hath bid us pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil : " and he hath promised, that " whatsoever we ask in the name of Christ according to his will, he will give us." So that if once you can but truly say, that it is your full resolution to forsake all for Christ if he call you to it, and that on the fore-mentioned grounds, you ought not then to vex your soul with fears of the issue ; for that is but to distrust God your Father and your strength. Only you must be careful to do your duty to the keeping up of your present resolutions, and to wait obediently on God for the help of his Spirit, and to beg it earnestly at his hands.

xv. Much less is it lawful for men to feign and suppose such calamities to themselves, as God doth never try men by, and then to ask themselves, ' Can I bear these for Christ ? ' And so to try themselves on false and dangerous grounds. Some use to be troubled, lest if they were put to long and exquisite torments for Christ, they should renounce him. One saith, ' I cannot endure the torments of hell for Christ ; ' another saith, ' Could I endure to be roasted, or torn in pieces so many weeks or days together ? ' Or ' Could I endure to die so many times over ? ' These are foolish, sinful questions, which Christ never desired you to put to yourselves. He never tries men's faith on this manner. Tormentors cannot go beyond his will. Nay, it is but very few he tries by death, and fewer by an extreme tormenting death. All this therefore proceeds from error.

xvi. Observe from the fifth mark, that the present prevalency of your resolutions now against those temptations which you encoun-

ter with, may well encourage you to expect that they should prevail hereafter, if God bring you into greater trials. Can you now follow Christ in a holy life, though your flesh repine, and would have its liberties and pleasures; and though the world deride or threaten you, or great ones turn against you and threaten your undoing? Can you part with your money to the poor, or to the promoting of any work of Christ, according to the measure of estate that God hath allotted you, notwithstanding all temptations to the contrary? Some trials you have now; if you can go well through these, you have no cause to disquiet your mind with fears of falling in greater trials. But he that cannot now deny his greedy appetite in meats and drink, so far as to forbear excess: nor can deny his credit with men, nor bear the scorns or frowns of the world, but be on the stronger side, and decline his duty to avoid danger, whatever become of conscience or God's favor, this man is not like to forsake and lay down his life for Christ and his cause.

Object. 'But though I break through lesser trials, I am not sure to overcome in greater, for the same measure of grace will not enable a man to forsake all, which will enable him to forsake a little. Many have gone through smaller trials, and after forsaken Christ in greater. And Christ makes it the property of temporaries that are not rooted in the faith, that they fall when tribulation and persecution for the Gospel ariseth, and therefore it seems they may stand till then; and if trial never come, they may never fall, and yet be unsound in the mean time.'

Answ. 1. If your trial now be considerable, the truth of grace may be manifested in it, though it be none of the greatest, and though in striving against sin you have not yet resisted unto blood. 2. If you carefully observe your own heart, you may discern whether the Spirit and your resolutions be prevalent, by their daily subduing and mortifying the flesh and its lusts. Nay, let me tell you, the victory of God's Spirit over the flattering, enticing world in prosperity, is as great and glorious, if not more, than that over the frowning, persecuting world in adversity. And therefore find the one, and you need not fear the other. Though I confess that hypocrites do not fall so visibly and shamefully always in prosperity as in adversity; for they have more pretences, advantages, and car-

nal shifts, to hide the shame of their falls. And for that in the parable in Matt. xiii. I pray you mark one thing. Christ seems to speak of every several sort of hearers by a gradation, speaking last of those that go farthest. The first sort, are the common, ignorant, negligent hearers, in whom the word takes no root at all. The second sort are those that give it a slight and shallow rooting, but no deep rooting at all; these are they that fall away in tribulation. By falling away, is meant the plain deserting Christ or the substance of his cause. These men till this falling away, though they professed Christ, and heard the word with joy, yet no doubt did not crucify the flesh and the world, whereby they might have discovered their unsoundness if they would, before tribulation came. First, by discerning that the word was not deep rooted: 1. In their judgment and estimation. 2. Or in their wills and settled resolution. Secondly; and by discerning the unmortified lusts of their hearts in the mean time. But it seems the third sort of hearers, likened to the thorny ground, went further than these; for here it is only said by Luke, viii. 14, "That they bring no fruit to perfection." However, whether these went farther than the other, or not, it is certain that these also had their trial, and fell in the trial. The deceitfulness of riches overturned these, as the heat of persecution overturned the other. So that it is evident that prosperity puts faith to the trial, as well as adversity. But mark the different manner of their falls and overthrows. They that are overthrown by adversity, are said to fall away, that is, to forsake Christ openly; but they that fall by prosperity, are not said to fall away; but only that the "deceitfulness of riches, and cares of the world, choke the word, so that it becomes unfruitful;" that is, brings no fruit to perfection. For usually these do not openly forsake Christ, but continue oft an unfruitful and hypocritical profession; insomuch that at that very time, when the word is choked and fruitless, yet the blade of profession may be as green as ever, and they may be so much in some duties, and have such golden words, and witty shifts to plead for every covetous practice, and put so fair a gloss on all their actions, that they may keep up the credit of being very eminent Christians. So that if your grace can carry you well through prosperity, you may be confident of the truth of it. 3. And then if it

be thus proved true and saving, you have cause to be confident that it will hold out in adversity also, and cause you to overcome the shake of tribulation. I think most men are better in adversity than in prosperity, though I confess no adversity is so shaking, as that which leaves it in a man's choice to come out of it by sinning. As for a man in health to be persecuted, and the persecutor to say, 'If thou wilt turn to my side and way, I will give thee thy life and preferment with it ;' but sickness or other sufferings imposed only by God, and which only God can take off, are nothing so shaking. For as the former draws us to please men, that they may deliver us, so this draws even the wicked to think of pleasing God, that he may deliver them.

xvii. Observe that when I ask 'whether this resolution do already prevail,' I do not mean any perfect prevailing ; nay, sin may prevail to draw you to a particular act (and how many I will not undertake to tell you) and yet still grace and the Spirit do conquer in the main. For you will say, that general and army get the victory who vanquish the other, and win the field, though yet perhaps a troop or regiment may be routed, and many slain.

xviii. When I speak of your 'overcoming all gross sins,' as I mean in ordinary, not doubting but it is too possible for a believer to commit a gross sin ; so I confess that it is hard to tell just which sins are to be called gross, and which infirmities only ; or (as some speak) which are mortal, and which not. And therefore this mark hath some difficulties, as to the right trying of it (of which more anon.)

xix. Yet I desire that you join them all together in trial, seeing it is in the whole that the true and full description of a Christian is contained. The same description of a true Christian (pre-supposing his right belief) I have drawn up in our public church profession, which in this county, the ministers have agreed on ; in the profession of consent in these words ; 'I do heartily take this one God for my only God and chief good ; and this Jesus Christ for my only Lord, Redeemer and Savior ; and this Holy Ghost for my Sanctifier ; and the doctrine by him revealed and sealed by his miracles, and now contained in the Holy Scriptures, do I take for the law of God, and the rule of my faith and life : and repent-

ing unfeignedly of my sins, I do resolve through the grace of God sincerely to obey him, both in holiness to God, and righteousness to man, and in special love to the saints, and communion with them, against all the temptations of the devil, the world, and my own flesh, and this to death.' He that sincerely can speak these words, is a sincere Christian.

xx. Lastly, that you may see that those five which I laid you down are all true marks, do but peruse these texts of Scripture following. For the first, Psalm xvi. 5. 2. lxxiii. 24—28. iv. 6. 7. i. 1—3. Josh. xxiv. 16—18. 21—24. Matt. vi. 19—21. Rom. vii. 24. viii. 17. 18. 23. Heb. xi. 10. 15, 16. 25—27. Psalm xvi. 5—8. For the second, see John i. 10—12. iii. 16. Mark xvi. 16. Acts xvi. 31. John xiv. 21. xvi. 27. Rom. xiv. 9. Luke xvi. 27. James i. 12. Matt. xxii. 37. 1 Cor. xvi. 22. Matt. x. 37. Rev. xxii. 14. Heb. v. 9. For the third, most of the same will serve, and Heb. xii. 14. Matt. vii. 24. Psalm i. 2, 3. Matt. v. 20. Acts x. 35. Rom. vii. 22. For the two last besides the former, see Heb. xi. 6. Rom. viii. 1—14. Gal. v. 17. 24. vi. 8. 1 Tim. vi. 9. Luke viii. 13. 1 John ii. 15. v. 4, 5. James i. 27. iv. 4. Gal. vi. 14. i. 4. Rom. xii. 2. Titus ii. 14. Matt. x. 37. Rom. ii. 5—7. Rev. xiv. 13. Phil. ii. 14. Col. iii. 23, 24. 1 Cor. iii. 8. 14. John xii. 16. 1 John iii. 22, 23. Gen. xxii. 16. Matt. x. 22. xxiv. 13. Heb. iii. 6. 14. vi. 11. Rev. ii. 26. 10. xii. 11. Matt. xvi. 25. x. 39. Mark xvii. 33. Rom. viii. 9. 13. Luke xiii. 3. 5. Rom. vi. 4—6. 12. 14. 16, 17. 22.

And thus I have given you such marks as you may safely try yourself by, and cleared the meaning of them to you. Now let me advise you to this use of them. 1. In your serious self-examination, try only by these, and not by any uncertain marks. I know there be promises of life made to some particular duties and single qualifications in Scripture, as to humility, meekness, alms-deeds, love to the godly, etc. ; but it is still both on supposition that they be not single in the person, but are accompanied with, and flow from that faith and love to God before-mentioned ; and also that they are in a prevailing degree.

2. Whenever any fresh doubtings arise in you upon the stirrings

of corruption, or debility of graces, still have recourse to these former marks ; and while you find these, let not any thing cause you to pass wrong judgments on yourself. Lay these now to your own heart, and tell me, ‘ Are you not unfeignedly willing to have Christ on the terms that he is offered ? Are you not willing to be more holy ? And beg of him to make you so ? Would you not be glad if your soul were more perfectly sanctified, and rid of that body of sin, though it were to the smart and displeasing of your flesh ? Are you not willing to wait on God, in the use of his ordinances, in that poor weak measure as you are able to perform them ? Durst you, or would you quit your part in God, heaven, Christ, and forsake the way of holiness, and do as the profane world doth, though it were to please your flesh, or save your state or life ? Do you not daily strive against the flesh and keep it under, and deny its desires ? Do you not deny the world when it would hinder you from works of mercy or public good, according to your ability ? Is it not the grief of your soul when you fall, and your greatest trouble that you cannot walk more obediently, innocently and fruitfully ? And do you not after sinning resolve to be more watchful for the time to come ? Are you not resolved to stick to Christ and his holy laws and ways, whatever changes or dangers come, and rather to forsake friends and all that you have, than to forsake him ? Yet in a godly jealousy and distrust of your own heart, do renounce your own strength, and resolve to do this only in the strength of Christ, and therefore daily beg it of him ? Is it not your daily care and business to please God and do his will, and avoid sinning in your weak measure ?’ I hope that all this is so, and your own case ; which, if it be, you have infallible evidences, and want but the sight and comfort of them ; you have the true grounds for assurance, though you want assurance itself ; your chief danger is over, though your trouble remain. Your soul is at the present in a safe condition, though not in the sense of it. You are in the state of salvation, though not of consolation. It must be your next work therefore to study God’s mercies, and take notice what he hath done for your soul. Let not so blessed a guest as the Holy Ghost dwell in you unobserved. Shall he do such wonders in you, and for you, and you not know it, or acknowledge it ? Shall he new-

beget you, and new-make you, and produce a spiritual and heavenly nature in you, who of yourself were so carnal and earthly, and will you not observe it? Had you any of these holy desires, endeavors, or resolutions of yourself by nature? Or have the ungodly about you any of them? O that you knew what a work of wonderful mercy, wisdom and power, the Spirit performeth in the renewing of a soul; then sure you would more observe and admire his love to you herein!

Direct. XII. The next rule for your direction for the right settling of your peace is this. 'You must know, that assurance of justification, adoption, and right of salvation, cannot be gathered from the smallest degree of saving grace.'

Here I must say something for explaining my meaning to you; and then give you my reasons of this assertion.

1. Understand that I speak of God's ordinary working by means, not denying but God may, by a voice from heaven, or an angel, or other supernatural revelation, bestow assurance on whom he pleaseth. But I hope all wise Christians will take heed of expecting this, or of trusting too much to seeming revelations, unless they could prove that God useth to confer assurance in this way; which I think they cannot.

2. By the smallest degree of grace, I mean, of faith, love, obedience, and those saving graces, whose acts are the condition of our salvation, and which in the fore-expressed marks I laid down to you. Do not therefore so mistake me, as to think that I speak of a small measure of those common gifts which are separable from true sanctification; such as are extensive knowledge, memory, ability of utterance in preaching, repeating, exhorting or praying; an ornate, plausible winning deportment before men, such as is commonly called good breeding or manners; an affected, humble, complimentary familiarity and condescension, to creep into men's estimation and affections, and steal their hearts, &c. Many a one that is strong in saving grace, is weak in all these, and other the like.

Now for my reasons.

1. I conceive that it is not possible for any minister punctually to set down a discernible difference between the least measure of true saving grace, and the highest degree of common grace; and to

say, just here it is that they part, or by this you may discern them. I do but say, I think so, because other men may know far more than I do ; but I will say it is as certain, that I am not able to do it, for my own part. This much I can tell, that the least degree of grace that is saving, doth determine the soul for God and Christ, against the world and flesh, that stand as competitors ; and so where Christ's interest prevaieth in the least measure, there is the least measure of saving grace. As when you are weighing two things in the balance, and at last make it so near even weight, that one end is turned and no more : so when you are considering whether to be for Christ, or for the flesh and the world, and your will is but even a very little determined to Christ, and preferreth him ; this is the least measure of saving grace. But then how a poor soul should discern this prevalent choice and determination of itself is all the question. For there is nothing more easy and common than for men to think verily, that they prefer Christ above the creature, as long as no temptation doth assault them, nor sensual objects stand up in any considerable strength to entice them. Nay, wicked men do truly, oftentimes, purpose to obey Christ before the flesh, and to take him for their Lord, merely in the general, when they do not know or consider the quality of his laws ; that they are so strict and spiritual, and contrary to the flesh, and hazardous to their worldly hopes and seeming happiness. But when it comes to particulars, and God saith, ' Now deny thyself, and thy friend, and thy goods, and thy life for my sake ; ' alas, it was never his resolution to do it ; nor will he be persuaded to it. But he that said to God, who sends him to labor in his vineyard, " I go, Sir," when he comes to find the unpleasingness of the work, he goes not, nor ever sets a hand to it. So that it is evident, that it is no true, saving resolution or willingness, which prevaieth not for actual obedience. Now here comes in the unresolvable doubt. What is the least measure of obedience, that will prove a man truly willing and resolved, or to have truly accepted of Christ for his Lord ? This obedience lieth in performing what is commanded, and avoiding what is forbidden. Now it is too certain, that every true believer is guilty of a frequent neglect of duty, yea, of known duty. We know we should love God more abundantly, and delight in him,

and meditate more on him, and pray more oft and earnestly than we do, and instruct our families more diligently, and speak against sin more boldly, and admonish our neighbors more faithfully, with many the like. “The good that we would do, we do not ;” Rom. vii. 19. Nay, the flesh so striveth against the Spirit, that “we cannot do the good we would ;” Gal. v. 17. Nay, many a true Christian in time of temptation, hath been drawn to omit secret prayer, or family duties, almost wholly for a certain space of time ; yea, and perhaps to be so corrupted in his judgment for a time, as to think he doth well in it, as also in forbearing praising God by psalms, receiving the sacraments, and communicating with the church, hearing the word publicly, etc. (for what duty almost is not denied of late ?) and perhaps may not only omit relieving the poor for a time, but excuse it. Now what man can punctually determine just how often a true Christian may be guilty of any such omission ? and just how long he may continue it ? and what the duties be which he may possibly so omit, and what not ?

So also in sins of commission. Alas, what sins did Noah, Lot, David, Solomon, Asa, Peter, etc. commit !

If we should say as the Papists and Arminians, that these being mortal sins, do for the time, till repentance restore him, cast a true Christian out of God’s favor into a state of damnation ; then what man breathing is able to enumerate those mortal sins, and tell us which be so damning, and which not ? Nay, if he could say, drunkenness is one, and gluttony another, who can set the punctual stint, and say, ‘Just so many bits a man must eat before he be a glutton ; or just so much he must drink before he be a drunkard ? or by such a sign the turning point may be certainly known ?’ We may have signs by which we may be tried at the bar of man ; but these are none of them taken from that smallest degree, which specieth and denominates the sin before God. If we avoid the fore-said opinion that one such sin doth bring us into the state of damnation, yet is the difficulty never the less ; for it is certain, that “he that commits sin is of the devil ;” 1 John iii. 8. and there are spots, which are not the spots of God’s children ; and all true faith will mortify the world to us, and us to it, (Gal. vi. 14.) and “he that is in Christ hath crucified the flesh, with the affections

and lusts thereof," (chap. v. 24. ;) and that "if we live after the flesh we shall die;" Rom. viii. 13. And "his servants we are to whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness;" chap. vi. 16. And "if we delight in iniquity, or regard it, God will not hear our prayers;" Psal. lxvi. 18. And that "he that nameth the name of Christ must depart from iniquity;" 1 Tim. ii. 19. And that "God will judge all men according to their works," and bid the workers of iniquity depart from him; Matt. vii. 23. Now can any man on earth tell us just how great, or how often sinning will stand with true grace, and how much will not? Who can find those punctual bounds in the word of God? I conclude, therefore, that no minister, or at least, none who is no wiser than I am, can give a true, discernible difference between the worst of saints, and the best of the unsanctified, or the weakest degree of true grace, and the highest of common grace; and so to help such weak Christians to true assurance of their salvation.

2. But as this is impossible to be declared by the teachers, so much more is it impossible to be discerned by the persons themselves, yea, though it could possibly be declared to them; and that for these reasons.

1. From the nature of the thing. Small things are hardly discerned. A little is next to none. 2. From the great darkness of man's understanding, and his unacquaintedness with himself (both the nature, faculties, and motions of his soul, naturally considered, and the moral state, dispositions, and motions of it,) and is it likely that so blind an eye can discern the smallest thing, and that in so strange and dark a place? Every purblind man cannot see an atom, or a pin, especially in the dark. 3. The heart is deceitful above all things, as well as dark; full of seemings, counterfeits, and false pretences. And a child in grace is not able to discover its jugglings, and understand a book, where almost every word is equivocal or mysterious. 4. The heart is most confused, as well as dark and deceitful; it is like a house, or shop of tools, where all things are thrown together on a heap, and nothing keeps its own place. There are such multiplicity of cogitations, fancies, and passions, and such irregular thronging in of them, and such a confused

reception, and operation of objects and conceptions, that it is a wonderful difficult thing for the best Christian to discern clearly the bent and actions, and so the state of his own soul. For in such a crowd of cogitations and passions, we are like men in a fair or crowd of people, where a confused noise may be heard, but you cannot well perceive what any of them say, except either some one near you that speaks much louder than all the rest, or else except you single out some one from the rest, and go close to him to confer with him of purpose. Our intellect and passions are like the lakes of water in the common roads, where the frequent passage of horses doth so muddy it, that you can see nothing in it, especially that is near the bottom; when in pure untroubled waters you may see a small thing. In such a confusion and tumult as is usually in men's souls, for a poor weak Christian to seek for the discovery of his sincerity, is according to the proverb, to seek for a needle in a bottle of hay.

5. Besides all this, the corrupt heart of man is so exceedingly backward to the work of self-examination, and the use of other means, by which the soul should be familiarly acquainted with itself, that in a case of such difficulty it will hardly ever overcome them, if it were a thing that might be done. In the best, a great deal of resolvedness, diligence, and unwearied constancy in searching into the state of the soul, is necessary to the attainment of a settled assurance and peace. How much more in them that have so small, and almost undiscernible a measure of grace to discover.

6. Yet further, the conceptions, apprehensions, and consequently the sensible motions of the will, and especially the passions, are all naturally exceeding mutable; and while the mobile, agile spirits are any way the instruments, it will be so; especially where the impression which is made in the understanding is so small and weak. Naturally man's mind and will is exceeding mutable, and turned into a hundred shapes in a few days, according as objects are presented to us, and the temperature of the body disposeth, helps, or hinders the mind. Let us hear one man reason the case, and we think he makes all as clear as the light; let us hear another solve all his arguments, and dispute for the contrary, and then we see that our apprehensions were abused. Let us hear him reply and refute all again, and confirm his cause, and then we think him in the right

again. Nothing more changeable than the conceivings and mind of man, till he be thoroughly resolved and habituated. Now in this case, how shall those who have but little grace, be able to discern it? It will not keep the mind from fluctuating. If they seem resolved for obedience to Christ to-day, to-morrow they are so shaken by some enticing object, and force of the same temptation, that their resolution is undiscernible; nay, actually they prefer sin at that time before obedience. It is impossible then but the soul should stagger and be at a loss; for it will judge of itself as it finds itself, and it cannot discern the habitual prevalency of Christ's interest, when they feel the actual prevalency of the flesh's interest. For the act is the only discoverer of the habit. And if Peter himself should have fallen to the examination of his heart, whether he preferred Christ before his life, at the same time when he was denying and forswearing Christ to save his life, do you think he could have discerned it? And yet even then Christ's interest was greatest in him habitually. If David should have gone to search, whether he preferred obedience to God, before his fleshly pleasure, when he was committing adultery; or before his credit, when he was plotting the death of Uriah, what discovery do you think he would have made? 7. Add to all these, that as these several distempers, were they but in the same measure in a weak Christian, as they are in the best or in most, would yet make the smallest measure of grace undiscernible (if we might suppose the smallest grace to be consistent with such a frame;) so it is certain, that whoever he be that hath the least measure of grace to discover in himself, he hath proportionably the least measure of abilities and helps to discover it, and the greatest measure of all the forementioned hindrances. He that hath but a very little repentance, faith, love, and obedience sincere, when he goeth to find it out, he hath in the same measure, a darker understanding to discern it than others have; and a greater strangeness and disacquaintance with himself; and more deceitfulness in his heart, and a greater confusion and hurly-burly in his thoughts and affections, and all more out of order and to seek. Also he hath a greater backwardness to the work of self-examination, and can hardly get his heart to it, and more hardly to do it thoroughly, and search to the quick, and most hardly to

hold on against all withdrawing temptations, till he have made a clearer discovery. And lastly, his soul is more mutable than stronger Christians are ; and therefore when cross actings are so frequent, he cannot discern the smallest prevailing habit. If (when you are weighing gold) the scales be turned but with one grain, every little jog, or wind, or unsteadfast holding, will actually lift up the heavier end ; and its preponderation is with great wavering and mobility.

8. Yet further, consider, that those that have least grace, have most sin, habitual and actual ; and they are so frequent in transgressing, that their failings are still in their eye, and thereby the prevalency of Christ's interest is made more doubtful and obscure. For when he asketh his own conscience, 'Do I will or love most the world and my fleshly delights, or Christ and his ways?'—presently conscience remembereth him. At such a time, and such a time thou didst choose thy fleshly pleasures, profits, or credit, and refuse obedience : and it is so oft, and so foully, that the soul is utterly at a loss, and cannot discern the habitual prevalent bent and resolution of the will.

9. Besides, conscience is a judge in man's soul, and will be accusing and condemning men so far as they are guilty. Now, they that make work for the most frequent and terrible accusations of conscience that will stand with true grace, are unlikely to have assurance. For assurance quiets the soul, and easeth it ; and a galled conscience works the contrary way. They that keep open the wound, and daily fret off the skin more, and are still grating on the galled part, are unlikely to have assurance.

10. Again, these weakest Christians being least in duty, and most in sinning (of any in whom sin reigneth not,) they are consequently most in provoking and displeasing God. And they that do so shall find that God will show them his displeasure, and will displease them again. They must not look to enjoy assurance, or see the pleased face of God, till they are more careful to please him, and are more sparing, and seldom in offending him. As God's universal justice in governing the world, will make as great a difference between the sincerely obedient, and disobedient, as there is between heaven and hell, so God's paternal justice in governing his family, will make as wide a difference between the more obedient children, and the less obedient, as is between his dreadful frowns,

and his joyous, reviving smiles; or between the smarting rod, or his encouraging rewards. 11. If God should give assurance and peace to the sinning and least obedient believers, he should not fit his providential disposals to their good. It is not that which their state requires, nor would it tend to their cure any more than a healing plaister to a sore that is rotten in the bottom, or a cordial to the removal of a cacochymy, or the purging out of corrupt, redundant humors. They are so inclined to the lethargy of security, that they have need of continual pinching, striking, or loud calling on, to keep them waking; still remember that by this weak Christian, I mean not every doubting, distressed soul that is weak in their own apprehension, and little in their own eyes, and poor in spirit; but I mean those that have the least measure of sincere love to Christ, and desire after him, and tenderness of conscience, and care to please God, and the greatest measure of security, worldliness, pride, flesh-pleasing, and boldness in sinning, which is consistent with sincerity in the faith. I believe there is no father or mother, that hath children to govern, but they know by experience, that there is a necessity of frowns and rods for the more disobedient; and that rewards and smiles are no cure for stubbornness or contempt. 12. Lastly, do but well consider, what a solecism in government it would be, and what desperate inconveniences it would have brought into the world, if God should have set such a punctual land-mark between his kingdom and the kingdom of satan, as we are ready to dream of. If God should have said in his word, just so oft a man may be drunk, or may murder, or commit adultery, or steal, or forswear himself, and yet be a true Christian and be saved! Or just so far a man may go, in neglecting duty to God and man, and in cherishing his flesh, hiding his sin, &c., and yet be a true believer and be saved. This would embolden men in sinning, and make them think, I may yet venture, for I stand on safe ground. And it would hinder repentance. Indeed it would be the way to rob God of his honor, and multiply provocations against him, and keep his children in disobedience, and hinder their growth in holiness, and cause a deformity in Christ's body, and a shame to his religion and sacred name. As for those that say, assurance never encourageth men in sin, but

tends to destroy it; I answer, it is true of God's assurance, seasonably given to those that are fit for it, and used by them accordingly. But if God should have told all the world, just how far they may sin, and yet be certain of salvation, this would have bred assurance in those that were unfit for it; and it would have been but the putting of new wine into old cracked bottles; or a new piece into an old garment, that would break them, or make worse the rent. I must therefore tell these objectors (I am sorry that so many of my old acquaintance now harp so much on this Antinomian string,) that ignorance or error hath so blinded them, that they have forgotten, or know not, 1. What an imperfect piece the best is in this life, much more the worst true Christian. 2. Nor what a subtle devil we have to tempt us. 3. Nor what an active thing corruption is, and what advantage it will take on unreasonable assurance. 4. Nor what the nature of grace and sanctification is; and how much of it lies in a godly jealousy of ourselves, and apprehension of our danger, and that "the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom:" see Heb. iv. 1. Nay, 5. They have forgotten what a man is, and how inseparable from his nature is the principle of self-preservation, and how necessary the apprehension of danger, and the fear of evil to himself, is to the avoiding of that evil, and so to his preservation. 6. Yea, if they knew but what a commonwealth or a family is, they would know that fear of evil, and desire of self-preservation, is the very motive to associations, and the groundwork of all laws and government, and a great part of the life of all obedience.

And thus I have fully proved to you, that the smallest measure of grace cannot help men to assurance in God's ordinary way.

Perhaps you will say, 'What comfort is there in this to a poor weak christian?' This is rather the way to put him quite out of heart and hope. I answer, no such matter. I shall shew the uses of this observation in the following Directions. In the meantime I will say but this, The expectation of unseasonable assurance, and out of God's way, is a very great cause of keeping many in languishing and distress, and of causing others to turn Antinomians, and snatch at comforts which God never gave them, and to feign and frame an assurance of their own making, or build upon the de-

lusions of the great deceiver, transforming himself into angel of light.

Direct. XIII. From the last mentioned observation, there is one plain conseq̄ary arising, which I think you may do well to note by the way, viz. 'That according to God's ordinary way of giving grace, it cannot be expected that christians should be able to know the very time of their first receiving or acting true saving grace, or just when they were pardoned, justified, adopted, and put into a state of salvation.'

This must needs be undeniable, if you grant the former point, That the least measure of grace yieldeth not assurance of its sincerity, (which is proved;) and withal, if you grant this plain truth, That it is God's ordinary way, to give a small measure of grace at the first. This I prove thus: 1. Christ likeneth God's kingdom of grace to a grain of mustard-seed, which is at the first, the least of all seeds, but after cometh to a tree: and to a little leaven, which leaveneth the whole lump. I will not deny, but this may be applied to the visible progress of the gospel, and increase of the church. But it is plainly applicable also to the kingdom of Christ within us. 2. The scripture oft calleth such young beginners, babes, children, novices, &c. 3. We are all commanded to grow in grace; which implieth, that we have our smallest measure at the first. 4. Heb. v. 12. sheweth that strength of grace should be according to time and means. 5. Common experience is an invincible argument for this. Men are at a distance from Christ, when he first calleth them to come to him; and many steps they have toward him before they reach to him. We are first so far enlightened as too see our sin and misery, and the meaning and truth of the gospel, and so roused out of our security, and made to look about us, and see that we have souls to save or lose, and that it is no jesting matter to be a christian. And so we come to understand the tenor of this covenant, and Christ's terms of saving men. But, alas, how long is it usually after this, before we come sincerely to yield to his terms, and take him as he is offered, and renounce the world, flesh, and the devil, and give up ourselves to him in a faithful covenant! We are long deliberating, before we can get our backward hearts to resolve. How then should a man know just when he was past the

highest step of common or preparative grace, and arrived at the first step of special grace?

Yet mark, that I here speak only of God's ordinary way of giving grace; for I doubt not, but in some God may give a higher degree of grace at the first day of conversion, than some others do attain in many years. And those may know the time of their true conversion, both because the effect was discernible, and because the suddenness makes the change more sensible and observable.

But this is not the ordinary course. Ordinarily convictions lie long on the soul before they come to a true conversion. Conscience is wounded, and smarting long, and long grudging against our sinful and negligent courses, and telling us of the necessity of Christ and a holy life, before we sincerely obey conscience, and give ourselves up to Christ. We seldom yield to the first conviction or persuasion. The flesh hath usually too long time given it to plead its own cause, and to say to the soul, 'Wilt thou forsake all thy pleasure and merry company, and courses? Wilt thou beggar thyself? or make thyself a scorn or mocking-stock to the world? Art thou ever able to hold out in so strict a course? and to be undone? and to forsake all, and lay down thy life for Christ? Is it not better to venture thyself in the same way as thou hast gone in, as well as others do, and as so many of thy forefathers have done before thee?' Under such sinful deliberations as these we usually continue long before we fully resolve; and many demurs and delays we make before we conclude to take Christ on the terms that he is offered to us. Now I make no doubt but most or many christians can remember how and when God stirred their consciences, and wakened them from their security, and made them look about them, and roused them out of their natural lethargy. Some can tell what sermon first did it; others can remember by what degrees and steps God was doing it long. The ordinary way appointed by God for the doing of it first, is the instruction of parents. And (as I have more fully manifested in my Book of Infant Baptism) if parents would do their duties, they would find that the word publicly preached was not appointed to be the first ordinary means of conversion and sanctification; but commonly, grace would be received in childhood; I speak not of baptismal relative

grace, consisting in the pardon of original sin, nor yet any infusion of habits before they have the use of reason (because I suppose it is hid from us, what God doth in that,) but I speak of actual conversion; and I prove that this should be the first ordinary way and time of conversion to the children of true christians, because it is the first means that God hath appointed to be used with them; Deut. vi. 6—8. Eph. vi. 4. Parents are commanded to teach their children the law of God urgently at home, and as they walk abroad, lying down, and rising up; and to bring them up in the admonition and nurture of the Lord, and to “train up a child in the way he should go and when they are old they will not depart from it;” Prov. xxii. 6. And children are commanded to “remember their Creator in the days of their youth; Eccles. xii. 1. And if this be God’s first great means, then doubtless he will ordinarily bless his own means here, as well as in the preaching of the word.

From all this I would have you learn this lesson, That you ought not trouble yourself with fears and doubts, lest you are not truly regenerate, because you know not the sermon or the very time and manner of your conversion; but find that you have grace, and then, though you know not just the time or manner of your receiving it, yet you may nevertheless be assured of salvation by it. Search therefore what you are, and how your will is disposed, and resolved, and how your life is ordered, rather than to know how you became such. I know the workings of the Spirit on the soul may be discerned, because they stir up discernible actings in our own spirits. The soul’s convictions, considerations, resolutions and affections, are no insensible things. But yet the work of grace usually begins in common grace, and so proceeds by degrees till it come to a special saving grace, even as the work of nature doth, first producing the matter, and then introducing the form; first producing the embryo, before it introduce a rational soul. And as no child knows the time or manner of its own formation, vivification or reception of that soul, so I think few true believers can say, just such a day, or at such a sermon I became a true justified, sanctified man. That was the hour of your true conversion and justification, when you first preferred God and Christ, and grace before

all things in this world, and deliberately and seriously resolved to take Christ for your Savior and Governor, and give up yourself to him to be saved, taught and governed, and to obey him faithfully to the death against all temptations, whatsoever you shall lose or suffer by it. Now I would but ask those very christians that think they do know the very sermon that converted them; Did that sermon bring you to this resolution? Or was it not only some troubling rousing preparation hereto? I think some desperate sickness or the like affliction is a very usual means to bring resolutions to be downright and fixed, with many souls that long delayed and fluctuated in unresolvèdness, and lay under mere ineffectual convictions.

Object. 'But this runs on your own grounds, that saving grace and common grace do but differ in degrees.'

Ans. I think most will confess that, as to the acts of grace, and that is it that we are now inquiring after; and that is all the means that we have of discerning the habits. Yet remember that I still tell you, 'That there is a special moral difference, though grounded but in a gradual natural difference.' Yea, and that one grain of the Spirit's working, which turns the will in a prevalent measure for Christ, (together with the illumination necessary thereto) deserves all those eulogies and high titles that are given it in the word; so great a change doth it make in the soul! Well may it be called 'The new creature:' 'Born of the Spirit:' 'The new life:' Yea, 'The image of God, and 'The Divine Nature.' (If that text be not meant of the Divine Nature in Christ which we are relatively made partakers of in our union with him.) When you are weighing things in the balance, you may add grain after grain, and it makes no turning or motion at all till you come to the very last grain, and then suddenly that end which was downward is turned upward. When you stand at a loss between two high ways, and know not which way to go, as long as you are deliberate, you stand still: all the reasons that come into your mind do not stir you; but the last reason which resolves you, setteth you in motion. So is it in the change of a sinner's heart and life; he is not changed (but preparing towards it) while he is but deliberating, whether he should choose Christ or the world? But the last reason that comes in and determineth his will to Christ, and makes him resolve and

enter a firm covenant with Christ, and say, 'I will have Christ for better or worse;' this maketh the greatest change that ever is made by any work in this world. For how can there be greater than the turning of a soul from the creature to the Creator? So distant are the terms of this change. After this one turning act Christ hath that heart, and the main bent and endeavors of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new end, a new rule and guide, and a new master. Before the flesh and the devil were his masters, and now Christ is his master. So that you must not think so meanly of the turning, determining, resolving act of grace, because it lieth but in a gradual difference naturally from common grace. If a prince should offer a condemned beggar to marry her, and to pardon her, and make her his queen, her deliberation may be the way to her consent, and one reason after another may bring her near to consenting. But it is that which turns her will to consent, resolve, covenant and deliver herself to him, which makes the great change in her state. Yet all the foregoing work of common grace hath a hand in the change, though only the turning resolution do effect it: it is the rest with this that doth it: as when the last grain turns the scales, the former do concur. I will conclude with Dr. Preston's words, in his "Golden Sceptre," page 210: *Object.* 'It seems then that the knowledge of a carnal man, and of a regenerate man, do differ but in degrees and not in kind.' *Answer.* 'The want of degrees here alters the kind, as in numbers, the addition of a degree alters the species and kind.' Read for this also, Dr. Jackson "Of Saving Faith," sect. iii. chap. iii. pp. 297, 298. and frequently in other places. So much for that observation.

Direct. XIV. Yet further I would have you to understand this: 'That as the least measure of saving grace is ordinarily undiscernible from the greatest measure of common grace, (notwithstanding the greatness of the change that it makes) so a measure somewhat greater is so hardly discernible, that it seldom brings assurance: and therefore it is only the stronger Christians that attain assurance ordinarily; even those who have a great degree of faith and love, and keep them much in exercise, and are very watchful and careful in obedience: and consequently (most Christians being of the

weaker sort) it is but few that do attain to assurance of their justification and salvation.'

Here are two or three points which I would have you distinctly to observe, though I lay them all together for brevity. 1. That it is only a greater measure of grace that will ordinarily afford assurance. 2. That therefore it is only the stronger, and holier, and more obedient sort of Christians that usually reach to a certainty of salvation. 3. That few Christians do reach to a strong or high degree of grace. 4. And therefore it is but few Christians that reach to assurance.

For the two first of these it will evidently appear that they are true, by reviewing the reasons which I gave of the last point save one. He that will attain to a certainty of salvation, must, 1. Have a large measure of grace to be discerned. 2. He must have that grace much in action, and lively action; for it is not mere habits that are discernible. 3. He must have a clear understanding to be acquainted with the nature of spiritual things; to know what is a sound evidence, and how to follow the search, and how to repel particular temptations. 4. He must have a good acquaintance and familiarity with his own heart, and to that end must be much at home, and be used sometimes to a diligent observation of his heart and ways. 5. He must be in a good measure acquainted with, and a conqueror of contradicting temptations. 6. He must have some competent cure of the deceitfulness of the heart, and it must be brought to an open, plain, ingenuous frame, willing to know the worst of itself. 7. He must have some cure of that ordinary confusion and tumultuous disorder that is in the thought and affections of men, and get things into an order in his mind. 8. He must be a man of diligence, resolution, and unwearied patience, that will resolvedly set on the work of self-examination, and painfully watch in it, and constantly follow it from time to time till he attain a certainty. 9. He must be one that is very fearful of sinning, and careful in close obedient walking with God, and much in sincere and spiritual duty, that he keep not conscience still in accusing and condemning him, and God still offended with him, and his wounds fresh bleeding, and his soul still smarting. 10. He must be a man of much fixedness and constan-

cy of mind, and not of the ordinary mutability of mankind ; that so he may not by remitting his zeal and diligence, lose the sight of his evidences, nor by leaving open his soul to an alteration by every new intruding thought and temptation, let go his assurance as soon as he attaineth it. All these things in a good degree are necessary to the attaining of assurance of salvation.

And then do I need to say any more to the confirmation of the third point, That few Christians reach this measure of grace ? O that it were not as clear as the light, and as discernible as the earth under our feet, that most true Christians are weaklings, and of the lower forms in the school of Christ ? Alas, how ignorant are most of the best, how little love, or faith, or zeal, or heavenly mindedness, or delight in God have they ? How unacquainted with the way of self-examination ? And how backward to it ? And how dull and careless in it ? Doing it by the halves as Laban searched Rachel's tent ? How easily put off with an excuse ? How little acquainted with their own hearts ? Or with satan's temptations and ways of deceiving ? How much deceitfulness remaineth in their hearts ? How confused are their minds ? And what distractions and tumults are there in their thoughts ? How bold are they in sinning ? And how little tenderness of conscience, and care of obeying have they ? How frequently do they wound conscience, provoke God, and obscure their evidences ? And how mutable their apprehensions ? And how soon do they lose that assurance which they once attained ? And upon every occasion quite lose the sight of their evidences ? Yea, and remit their actual resolutions, and so lose much of the evidence itself ? Is not this the common case of godly people ? O that we could truly deny it. Let their lives be witness, let the visible neglects, worldliness, pride, impatency of plain reproof, remissness of zeal, dulness and customariness in duty, strangeness to God, unwillingness to secret prayer and meditation, unacquaintedness with the Spirit's operations and joys, their unpeaceableness one with another, and their too frequent blemishing the glory of their holy profession by the unevenness of their walking, let all these witness, whether the school of Christ have not most children in it ; and very few of them ever go to the university of

riper knowledge : and how few of those are fit to begin here the works of their priestly office, which they must live in for ever, in the high and joyful praises of God, and of the Lamb, who hath redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests to God, that they may reign with him for ever. I am content to stand to the judgment of all humble, self-knowing Christians, whether this be not true of most of themselves ; and for those that deny it, I will stand to the judgment of their godly neighbors, who perhaps know them better than they know themselves.

And then this being all so, the fourth point is undeniable, That it is but very few Christians that reach to assurance of salvation. If any think (as intemperate hot-spirited men are like enough to charge me) that in all this I countenance the popish doctrine of doubting and uncertainty, and contradict the common doctrine of the reformed divines that write against them ; I answer, 1. That I do contradict both the Papists that deny assurance, and many foreign writers, who make it far more easy, common, and necessary than it is (much more both them and the Antinomists, who place justifying faith in it.) But I stand in the midst between both extremes ; and I think I have the company of most English divines. 2. I come not to be of this mind merely by reading books, but mainly by reading my own heart, and consulting my own experience, and the experience of a very great number of godly people of all sorts, who have opened their hearts to me, for almost twenty years time. 3. I would entreat the gainsayers to study their own hearts better for some considerable time, and to be more in hearing the case and complaints of godly people ; and by that time they may happily come to be of my mind. 4. See whether all those divines that have been very practical and successful in the work of God, and much acquainted with the way of recovery of lost souls, be not all of the same judgment as myself in this point, (such as T. Hooker, Jo. Rogers, Preston, Sibbs, Bolton, Dod, Culverweil, etc.) And whether the most confident men for the contrary be not those that study books more than hearts, and spend their days in disputing, and not in winning souls to God from the world.

Lastly, Let me add to what is said, these two proofs of this fourth point here asserted.

1. The constant experience of the greatest part of believers tells us that certainty of salvation is very rare. Even of those that live comfortably and in peace of conscience, yet very few of them do attain to a certainty. For my part, it is known that God in undeserved mercy hath given me long the society of a great number of godly people, and great interest in them, and privacy with them, and opportunity to know their minds, and this in many places (my station by providence having been oft removed,) and I must needs profess, that of all these I have met with few, yea very few indeed, that if I seriously and privately asked them, 'Are you certain that you are a true believer, and so are justified, and shall be saved,' durst say to me, 'I am certain of it.' But some in great doubts and fears : most too secure and neglective of their states without assurance, and some in so good hopes (to speak in their own language) as calmeth their spirits, that they comfortably cast themselves on God in Christ. And those few that have gone so far beyond all the rest, as to say, 'They were certain of their sincerity and salvation,' were the professors, whose state I suspected more than any of the rest, as being the most proud, self-conceited, censorious, passionate, unpeaceable sort of professors ; and some of them living scandalously, and some fallen since to more scandalous ways than ever ; and the most of their humble, godly acquaintance and neighbors suspected them as well as I. Or else some very few of them that said they were certain, were honest godly people (most women) of small judgment and strong affections, who depended most on that which is commonly called, 'The sense or feeling of God's love ;' and were the lowest at some times as they were the highest at other times ; and they that were one month certain to be saved, perhaps the next month were almost ready to say, they should certainly be damned. So that taking out all these sorts of persons, the sober, solid, judicious believers that could groundedly and ordinarily say, 'I am certain that I shall be saved,' have been so few, that it is sad to me to consider it. If any other men's experience be contrary, I am glad of it, so be it they be sober, judicious men, able to gather experiences ; and so they live not among mere Antinomians, and take not the discovery of their mere opinion, for a discovery of experience. For I have seen in

divers professors of my long acquaintance, the strange power of opinion and fancy in this thing. I have known those that have lived many years in doubting of their salvation, and all the while walked uprightly: and in the late wars, falling into the company of some Anabaptists, they were by them persuaded that there was no right way to their comfort, but by being re-baptized, and associating themselves with the re-baptized church, and abstaining from the hearing of the unbaptized parish-priests (as they called them.) No sooner was this done, but all their former doubtings and troubles were over, and they were as comfortable as any others (as themselves affirmed) which no doubt proceeded from partly the strength of fancy, conceiving it should be so, and partly from the novelty of their way which delighted them, and partly from the strong opinion they had that this was the way of salvation, and that the want of this did keep them in the dark so long; and partly from satan's policy, who troubleth people least, when they are in a way that pleaseth him; but when these people had lived a year or two in this comfortable condition, they fell at last into the society of some Libertines or Familists, who believe that the Scriptures are all but a dream, fiction, or allegory; these presently persuaded them, that they were fools to regard baptism or such ordinances, and that they might come to hear again in our congregations, seeing all things were lawful, and there was no heaven or hell but within men, and therefore they should look to their safety and credit in the world, and take their pleasure. This lesson was quickly learned, and then they cried down the Anabaptists, and confessed they were deluded, and so being grown loose while they were Anabaptists, to mend the matter, they grew Epicures when they had been instructed by the Libertines; and this was the end of their new-gotten comfort. Others I have known that have wanted assurance, and falling among the Antinomians, were told by them that they undid themselves by looking after signs and marks of grace, and so laying their comforts upon something in themselves; whereas they should look only to Christ for comfort, and not at any thing in themselves at all; and for assurance, it is only the witness of the Spirit without any marks that must give it them; and to fetch comfort from their own graces and obedience, was to

make it themselves instead of Christ and the Holy Ghost, and was a legal way. No sooner was this doctrine received, but the receivers had comfort at will, and all was sealed up to them presently by the witness of the Spirit in their own conceits. Whence this came, judge you. I told you my judgment before. Sure I am that the sudden looseness of their lives, answering their ignorant, loose, ungospel-like doctrine, did certify me that the Spirit of comfort was not their comforter; for he is also a Spirit of holiness, and comforteth men by the means of a holy gospel, which hath precepts and threatenings as well as promises.

2. And as the experience of the state of believers assureth us that few of them attain to certainty; so experience of the imperfection of their understanding shews us, that few of them are immediately capable of it. For how few believers be there that understand well what is sound evidence and what not? Nay, how many learned men have taught them, that the least unfeigned desire of grace, is the grace itself, as some say, or at least a certain evidence of it, as others say. Whereas, alas! how many have unfeignedly desired many graces, and yet have desired the glory and profits of the world so much more, that they have miscarried and perished. How many have taught them, that the least unfeigned love to God or to the brethren, is a certain mark of saving grace; whereas many a one hath unfeignedly loved God and the brethren, who yet have loved house, land, credit, pleasure, and life so much more that God hath been thrust as it were into a corner, and hath had but the world's leavings. And the poor saints have had but little compassion or relief from them, nor would be looked on in times of danger and disgrace. As Austin and the schoolmen used to say, "Wicked men do, '*uti Deo, et frui creaturis,*' Use God and enjoy the creatures; godly men do '*frui Deo, et uti creaturis,*' enjoy God and use the creatures." The meaning is, both regenerate and unregenerate have some will or love, both to God and to the creature: but the wicked do will or love the creature as their chief good, with their chiefest love, and they only love God as a means to help them to the creature, with a love subordinate to their love to the creature: whereas the godly do will or love God as their chief good, with their chiefest love or com-

placency ; and love the creature but as the means of God, with an inferior love.

If then the nature of sincerity be so little known, then the assurance of sincerity cannot be very common. More might be said to prove that certainty of salvation is not common among true Christians ; but that it is labor in vain, as to them, seeing experience and their own ready confession doth witness it.

Now what is the use that I would have you make of this ? Why it is this. If assurance of sincerity and justification (much more of salvation) be so rare among true Christians, then you have no cause to think that the want of it proveth you to be no true Christian. You see then that a man may be in a state of salvation without it ; and that it is not justifying faith, as some have imagined, nor yet a necessary concomitant of that faith. You see that you were mistaken in thinking that you had not the spirit of adoption, because you had no assuring witness within you effectively testifying to you that you are the child of God. All God's children have the Spirit of adoption. (For because they are sons, therefore hath God sent the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, whereby they cry, ' Abba, Father ;' Gal. iv. 6.) But all God's children have not assurance of their adoption, therefore the Spirit of adoption doth not always assure those of their adoption in whom it abideth. It is always a witness-bearer of their adoption ; but that is only objectively by his graces and operations in them, as a land-mark is a witness whose land it is where it standeth ; or as your sheep-mark witnesseth which be your sheep ; or rather as a sensible soul witnesseth a living creature, or a rational soul witnesseth that we are men. But efficiently it doth not always witness ; as a land-mark or sheep-mark is not always discerned ; and a brute knows not itself to be a brute ; and a man is not always actually knowing his own humanity, nor can know it at all in the womb, in infancy, in distraction, in an epilepsy, apoplexy, or the like disease, which deprives him of the use of reason. Besides, it is no doubt but the apostle had some respect to the eminent gift of the Spirit, for tongues, prophecies, miracles, and the like, which was proper to that age ; though still as including the Spirit of holiness.

You see then that you need not be always in disquiet when you

want assurance. For else how disquiet a life should most Christians live ! I shall shew you more anon, that all a man's comforts depend not so on his assurance, but that he may live a comfortable life without it. Trouble of mind may be overcome ; conscience may be quieted ; true peace obtained ; yea, a man may have that joy in the Holy Ghost, wherein the kingdom of God is said to consist, without certainty of salvation. (If there be any passages in my Book of Rest, part iii. pressing to get assurance, which seem contrary to this, I desire that they may be reduced to this sense, and no otherwise understood.) This shall be further opened anon, and other grounds of comfort manifested, besides assurance.

Direct. XV. Yea thus much more I would here inform you of, "That many holy, watchful and obedient Christians, are yet uncertain of their salvation, even then when they are certain of their justification and sanctification ; and that because they are uncertain of their perseverance and overcoming ; for a man's certainty of his salvation can be no stronger than is his certainty of enduring to the end and overcoming."

That you may not misunderstand me in this, observe, 1. That I do not say perseverance is a thing uncertain in itself. 2. Nor that it is uncertain to all Christians. 3. But that it is uncertain to many, even strong and self-knowing Christians. Divines use to distinguish of the certainty of the object and of the subject ; and the former is either of the object of God's knowledge, or of man's. I doubt not but God knows certainly who shall be saved, which, with his decree, doth cause that which we call certainty of the object as to man's understanding ; but men themselves do not always know it.

If a man have the fullest certainty in the world that he is God's child, yet if he be uncertain whether he shall so continue to the end, it is impossible that he should have a certainty of his salvation ; for it is he only that endureth to the end that shall be saved.

Now that many eminent Christians of great knowledge, and much zeal and obedience, are uncertain of their perseverance, is proved by two infallible arguments. 1. By experience : if any should be so censorious as to think that none of all those nations and churches abroad, that deny the doctrine of certain persever-

place of all believers, have any strong Christians among them, yet have had the knowledge of such at home. 2. Besides the difficulty of the subject is a clear argument that a strong Christian may be uncertain of it. God hath made all those points plain in Scripture, which must be believed as of necessity to salvation: but the certainty of all believers' perseverance, is not a point of flat necessity to salvation to be believed. Otherwise it would be a hard matter to prove, that any considerable number were ever saved till of late; or are yet saved, but in a very few countries. It is a point that the churches never did put into their creed, where they summed up those points that they held necessary to salvation. There are a great number of texts of Scripture, which seeming to intimate the contrary, do make the point of great difficulty to many of the wisest; and those texts that are for it, are not so express as fully to satisfy them. Besides, that the examples of these ten years last past have done more to stagger many sober wise Christians in this point, than all the arguments that were ever used by Papists, Arminians, or any other, to see what kind of men in some places have fallen, and how far, as I am unwilling further to mention.

But I think by this time I have persuaded you, that a proper certainty of our salvation is not so common a thing as some controversial doctors, or some self-conceited professors do take it to be; and therefore that you must not lay all your comfort on your assurance of salvation. As for them who are most highly confident both of the doctrine of the certain perseverance of every believer, merely upon tradition and prejudice, or else upon weak grounds, which will not bear them out in their confidence; and are as confident of their own salvation on as slender grounds, having never well understood the nature of saving grace, sincerity, examination, nor assurance; nor understood the causes of doubting, which else might have shaken them; I will not call their greatest confidence by the name of assurance or certainty of salvation, though it be accompanied with never so great boastings, or pretences, or expressions of the highest joys. And for yourself, I advise you first use those comforts which those may have who come short of assurance.

enter a firm covenant with Christ, and say, 'I will have Christ for better or worse ;' this maketh the greatest change that ever is made by any work in this world. For how can there be greater than the turning of a soul from the creature to the Creator ? So distant are the terms of this change. After this one turning act Christ bath that heart, and the main bent and endeavors of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new end, a new rule and guide, and a new master. Before the flesh and the devil were his masters, and now Christ is his master. So that you must not think so meanly of the turning, determining, resolving act of grace, because it lieth but in a gradual difference naturally from common grace. If a prince should offer a condemned beggar to marry her, and to pardon her, and make her his queen, her deliberation may be the way to her consent, and one reason after another may bring her near to consenting. But it is that which turns her will to consent, resolve, covenant and deliver herself to him, which makes the great change in her state. Yet all the foregoing work of common grace hath a hand in the change, though only the turning resolution do effect it : it is the rest with this that doth it : as when the last grain turns the scales, the former do concur. I will conclude with Dr. Preston's words, in his "Golden Sceptre," page 210 : *Object*. 'It seems then that the knowledge of a carnal man, and of a regenerate man, do differ but in degrees and not in kind.' *Answer*. 'The want of degrees here alters the kind, as in numbers, the addition of a degree alters the species and kind.' Read for this also, Dr. Jackson "Of Saving Faith," sect. iii. chap. iii. pp. 297, 298. and frequently in other places. So much for that observation.

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enter a firm covenant with Christ, and say, 'I will have Christ for better or worse ;' this maketh the greatest change that ever is made by any work in this world. For how can there be greater than the turning of a soul from the creature to the Creator ? So distant are the terms of this change. After this one turning act Christ bath that heart, and the main bent and endeavors of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new end, a new rule and guide, and a new master. Before the flesh and the devil were his masters, and now Christ is his master. So that you must not think so meanly of the turning, determining, resolving act of grace, because it lieth but in a gradual difference naturally from common grace. If a prince should offer a condemned beggar to marry her, and to pardon her, and make her his queen, her deliberation may be the way to her consent, and one reason after another may bring her near to consenting. But it is that which turns her will to consent, resolve, covenant and deliver herself to him, which makes the great change in her state. Yet all the foregoing work of common grace hath a hand in the change, though only the turning resolution do effect it : it is the rest with' this that doth it : as when the last grain turns the scales, the former do concur. I will conclude with Dr. Preston's words, in his "Golden Sceptre," page 210 : *Object.* 'It seems then that the knowledge of a carnal man, and of a regenerate man, do differ but in degrees and not in kind.' *Answer.* 'The want of degrees here alters the kind, as in numbers, the addition of a degree alters the species and kind.' Read for this also, Dr. Jackson "Of Saving Faith," sect. iii. chap. iii. pp. 297, 298. and frequently in other places. So much for that observation.

Direct. XIV. Yet further I would have you to understand this : 'That as the least measure of saving grace is ordinarily undiscernible from the greatest measure of common grace, (notwithstanding the greatness of the change that it makes) so a measure somewhat greater is so hardly discernible, that it seldom brings assurance : and therefore it is only the stronger Christians that attain assurance ordinarily ; even those who have a great degree of faith and love, and keep them much in exercise, and are very watchful and careful in obedience : and consequently (most Christians being of the

no one fears a dove, a lamb, a good man, a merciful, compassionate governor, except only the rebels or notorious offenders that know he is bound in justice to destroy or punish them. And none should fear distrustfully the wrath of a gracious God, but they who will not submit to his mercy, and will not have Christ to reign over them, and therefore may know that he is bound in justice, if they come not in, to destroy them. But for you that would be obedient and reformed, and are troubled that you are no better, and beg of God to make you better, and have no sin, but what you would be glad to be rid of, may not you, at least, see a strong probability that it shall go well with you? O make use therefore of this probability; and if you have but hopes that God will do you good, rejoice in those hopes till you can come to rejoice in assurance.

And here let me tell you, that probabilities are of divers degrees, according to their divers grounds. Where men have but little probability of their sincerity, and a greater probability that they are not sincere in the faith, these men may be somewhat borne up, but it behoves them presently to search in fear, and to amend that which is the cause of their fear. Those that have more probability of the sincerity of their hearts than of the contrary, may well have more peace than trouble of mind. Those that have yet a higher degree of probability, may live in more joy, and so according to the degree of probability may their comforts still arise.

And observe also, that it is but the highest degree of this probability here which we call a certainty: for it is a moral certainty, and not that which is called a certainty of divine faith, nor that which is called a certainty of evidence in the strictest sense, though yet evidence there is for it. But it is the same evidences materially, which are the ground of probability and of certainty; only sometimes they differ gradually (one having more grace and another less,) and sometimes not so neither; for he that hath more grace, may discern but a probability in it, (through some other defect,) no more than he that hath less. But when one man discerns his graces and sincerity but darkly, he hath but a probability of salvation manifested by them; and when another discerneth them more clearly, he hath a stronger probability; and he that discerneth them most clearly (if other necessities concur) hath that which we call a certainty.

enter a firm covenant with Christ, and say, 'I will have Christ for better or worse ;' this maketh the greatest change that ever is made by any work in this world. For how can there be greater than the turning of a soul from the creature to the Creator ? So distant are the terms of this change. After this one turning act Christ hath that heart, and the main bent and endeavors of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new end, a new rule and guide, and a new master. Before the flesh and the devil were his masters, and now Christ is his master. So that you must not think so meanly of the turning, determining, resolving act of grace, because it lieth but in a gradual difference naturally from common grace. If a prince should offer a condemned beggar to marry her, and to pardon her, and make her his queen, her deliberation may be the way to her consent, and one reason after another may bring her near to consenting. But it is that which turns her will to consent, resolve, covenant and deliver herself to him, which makes the great change in her state. Yet all the foregoing work of common grace hath a hand in the change, though only the turning resolution do effect it : it is the rest with this that doth it : as when the last grain turns the scales, the former do concur. I will conclude with Dr. Preston's words, in his "Golden Sceptre," page 210 : *Object.* 'It seems then that the knowledge of a carnal man, and of a regenerate man, do differ but in degrees and not in kind.' *Answer.* 'The want of degrees here alters the kind, as in numbers, the addition of a degree alters the species and kind.' Read for this also, Dr. Jackson "Of Saving Faith," sect. iii. chap. iii. pp. 297, 298. and frequently in other places. So much for that observation.

Direct. XIV. Yet further I would have you to understand this : 'That as the least measure of saving grace is ordinarily undiscernible from the greatest measure of common grace, (notwithstanding the greatness of the change that it makes) so a measure somewhat greater is so hardly discernible, that it seldom brings assurance : and therefore it is only the stronger Christians that attain assurance ordinarily ; even those who have a great degree of faith and love, and keep them much in exercise, and are very watchful and careful in obedience : and consequently (most Christians being of the

weaker sort) it is but few that do attain to assurance of their justification and salvation.'

Here are two or three points which I would have you distinctly to observe, though I lay them all together for brevity. 1. That it is only a greater measure of grace that will ordinarily afford assurance. 2. That therefore it is only the stronger, and holier, and more obedient sort of Christians that usually reach to a certainty of salvation. 3. That few Christians do reach to a strong or high degree of grace. 4. And therefore it is but few Christians that reach to assurance.

For the two first of these it will evidently appear that they are true, by reviewing the reasons which I gave of the last point save one. He that will attain to a certainty of salvation, must, 1. Have a large measure of grace to be discerned. 2. He must have that grace much in action, and lively action; for it is not mere habits that are discernible. 3. He must have a clear understanding to be acquainted with the nature of spiritual things; to know what is a sound evidence, and how to follow the search, and how to repel particular temptations. 4. He must have a good acquaintance and familiarity with his own heart, and to that end must be much at home, and be used sometimes to a diligent observation of his heart and ways. 5. He must be in a good measure acquainted with, and a conqueror of contradicting temptations. 6. He must have some competent cure of the deceitfulness of the heart, and it must be brought to an open, plain, ingenuous frame, willing to know the worst of itself. 7. He must have some cure of that ordinary confusion and tumultuous disorder that is in the thought and affections of men, and get things into an order in his mind. 8. He must be a man of diligence, resolution, and unwearied patience, that will resolvedly set on the work of self-examination, and painfully watch in it, and constantly follow it from time to time till he attain a certainty. 9. He must be one that is very fearful of sinning, and careful in close obedient walking with God, and much in sincere and spiritual duty, that he keep not conscience still in accusing and condemning him, and God still offended with him, and his wounds fresh bleeding, and his soul still smarting. 10. He must be a man of much fixedness and constan-

for evidences may be unseen, and require a great deal of holy skill and diligence to try them, which few have ; but these experiences are near us, even in our bodies, and shew themselves ; they make all our bones say, " Lord, who is like unto thee ? " And it is a great advantage to have the help of sense itself for our consolation. I hope you yet remember the choice particular providences, by which God hath manifested to you his goodness, even from your youth till now : especially his frequent answering of your prayers ! Methinks these should do something to the dispelling of those black, distrustful thoughts of God. I could wish you would write them down, and oft review them : and when temptations next come, remember with David, who helped you against the lion and the bear, and, therefore, fear not the uncircumcised Philistine.

2. And you may make great use also of the experiences of others. Is it not a great satisfaction to hear twenty, or forty, or an hundred christians, of the most godly lives, to make the very same complaints as you do yourself ? The very same complaints have I heard from as many. By this you may see your case is not singular, but the ordinary case of the tenderest consciences, and of many that walk uprightly with God. And also is it not a great help to you, to hear other christians tell how they have come into those troubles, and how they have got out of them ? What hurt them ? And what helped them ? And how God dealt with them, while they lay under them ? How desirous are diseased persons to talk with others that have had the same disease ? And to hear them tell how it took them, and how it held them, and especially what cured them ? Besides, it will give you much stronger hopes of cure and recovery to peace of conscience, when you hear of so many that have been cured of the same disease. Moreover, is it not a reviving thing, to hear christians open the goodness of the Lord ? And that in particular, as upon experience they have found him to their own souls ? To hear them tell you of such notable discoveries of God's special providence and care of his people, as may repel all temptations to atheism and unbelief ? To hear them give you their frequent and full experiences of God's hearing and answering their prayers, and helping them in their distresses ? Though the carnal part of the mercy were only theirs, yet by improvement, the spirit-

ual part may be yours : you may have your faith, and love, and joy, confirmed by the experience of David, Job, Paul, which are past so long ago ; and by the experiences of all your godly acquaintance, as if they were your own. This is the benefit of the unity of the church ; the blessings of one member of the body are blessings to the rest ; and if one rejoice the rest may rejoice with them, not only for their sakes, but also for their own. Such as God is to the rest of his children, such is he and will be to you. He is as ready to pity you as them, and to hear your complaints and moans as theirs. And lest we should think that none of them were so bad as we, he hath left us the examples of his mercies to worse than ever we were. You never were guilty of witchcraft, and open idolatry, as Manasses was, and that for a long time, and drawing the whole nation, and chief part of the visible church on earth, into idolatry with him. You never had your hand in the blood of a saint, and even of the first martyr (Stephen) as Paul had. You never hunted after the blood of the saints, and persecuted them from city to city as he did ; and yet God did not only forgive him, but was found of him when he never sought him, yea, when he was persecuting him in his members, and kicking against the pricks ; yea, and made him a chosen vessel to bear about his name, and a noble instrument of the propagation of his gospel, as if he had never been guilty of any such crimes, that he might be an encouraging example to the unworthiest sinners, and in him might appear to the riches of his mercy ; 1 Tim. iii. 13. 16. See also Titus iii. 3—7. Is there no ground of comfort in these examples of the saints ? The same we may say of the experiences of God's people still ; and doubtless it were well if experimental christians did more fully and frequently open to one another their experiences ; it were the way to make private particular mercies to be more public and common mercies ; and to give others a part in our blessings, without any diminution of them to ourselves. Not that I would have this openly and rashly done (by those, who through their disability to express their minds, do make the works and language of the Spirit seem ridiculous to carnal ears,) as I perceive some in a very formality would have it (as if it must be one of their church customs, to satisfy the society of the fitness of each member before they will receive them :) but I

would have christians that are fit to express their minds, to do it in season and with wisdom ; especially those to whom God hath given any more eminent and notable experiments, which may be of public use. Doubtless, God hath lost very much of the honor due to his name, and poor christians much of the benefit which they might have received, (and may challenge by the mutual interest of fellow members) for want of the public communication of the extraordinary and more notable experiences of some men. Those that write the lives of the holiest men when they are dead, can give you but the outside and carcase of their memorials ; the most observable passages are usually secret, known only to God and their own souls, which none but themselves are able to communicate. For my own part, I do soberly and seriously profess to you, that the experiences I have had of God's special providences, and fatherly care, and specially of his hearing prayers, have been so strange, and great, and exceeding numerous, that they have done very much to the quieting of my spirit, and the persuading of my soul of God's love to me, and the silencing and shaming of my unbelieving heart, and especially for the conquering of all temptations that lead to atheism or infidelity, to the denying of special providence, or of the verity of the gospel, or of the necessity of holy prayer and worshipping of God. Yea, those passages that in the bulk of the thing seem to have no great matter in them, yet have come at such seasons, in such a manner, in evident answer to prayers, that they have done much to my confirmation. O happy afflictions and distresses ! Sufferings and danger force us to pray, and force the cold and customary petitioner to seriousness and importunity. Importunate prayers bring evident returns ; such returns give us sensible experiences ; such experiences raise faith, love and thankfulness, kill unbelief and atheism, and encourage the soul in all distresses, go the same way as when it sped so well. I often pity the poor seduced infidels of this age, that deny scripture and Christ himself, and doubt of the usefulness of prayer and holy worship ; and I wish that they had but the experiences that I have had. O how much more might it do than all their studies and disputes ! Truly I have once or twice had motions in my mind, to have publicly and freely communicated my experiences in a rela-

tion of the more observable passages of my life ; but I found that I was not able to do it to God's praise, as was meet, without a shew of ostentation or vanity, and therefore I forbore.

Direct. XVIII. Next, that you may yet further understand the true nature of assurance, faith, doubting and desperation, I would have you observe this, 'That God doth not command every man, nor properly any man, ordinarily, by his word, to believe that his sins are forgiven, and himself is justified, adopted, and shall be saved. But he hath prescribed a way by which they may attain to assurance of these, in which way it is men's duty to seek it : so that our assurance is not properly that which is called a certainty of belief.'

I have said enough for the proof of this proposition in the third part of my Book of Rest, chap. ii. whither I must refer you. But there is more to be said yet for the application of it. But first I must briefly tell you the meaning of the words. 1. God commandeth us all to believe (wicked and godly,) that our sins are made pardonable by the sufficient satisfaction of Christ for them ; and that God is very merciful and ready to forgive ; and that he hath conditionally forgiven us all in the new covenant, making a deed of gift of Christ, and pardon, and life in him, to all, on condition they believe in him, and accept what is given. 2. But no man is commanded to believe that he is actually forgiven. 3. Therefore I say our assurance is not strictly to be called belief, or a certainty of belief ; for it is only our certain belief of those things which we take on the mere credit of the witnesser or revealer, which we call certainty of faith. Indeed, we commonly in English use the word 'belief,' to express any confident, but uncertain, opinion or persuasion ; and if any will so take it, then I deny not but our assurance is a belief. But it is commonly taken by divines for an assent to any thing on the credit of the word of the revealer, and so is distinguished both from the sensible apprehension of things, and from principles that are known by the mere light and help of nature ; and from the knowledge of conclusions, which by reasoning we gather from those principles. Though yet one and the same thing may be known, as revealed in nature, and believed as revealed immediately or supernaturally ; and so we both know and believe that

there is one only God, who made and preserveth all things : 4. But our assurance is an act of knowledge, participating of faith and internal sense or knowledge reflect. For divine faith saith, "He that believeth is justified, and shall be saved." Internal sense and knowledge of ourselves saith, 'But I believe.' Reason, or discursive knowledge saith, 'Therefore I am justified and shall be saved.'

Only I must advise you, that you be not troubled when you meet with that which is contrary to this in any great divines : for it is only our former divines, whose judgments were partly hurt by hot disputations with the Papists herein, and partly not come to that maturity as others since then have had opportunity to do. And therefore in their expositions of the creed, and such like passages in the text, they eagerly insist on it, that when we say, 'We be-
lieve the forgiveness of sin, and life everlasting,' every man is to profess that he believeth that his own sins are forgiven, and he shall have life everlasting himself. But our later divines, and especially the English, and most especially those that deal most in practicals, do see the mistake, and lay down the same doctrine which I teach you here ; God bids us not believe as from him, more than he hath revealed. But only one of the propositions is revealed by God's testimony, "He that believeth shall be saved." But it is no where written that you do believe, nor that you shall be saved ; nor any thing equivalent. And therefore you are not commanded to believe either of these. How the Spirit revealeth these, I have fully told you already. In our creed therefore we do profess to believe remission of sins to be purchased by Christ's death, and in his power to give, and given in his Gospel to all, on condition of believing in Christ himself for remission : but not to believe that our own sins are actually and fully pardoned.

My end in telling you this again (which I have told you elsewhere) is this, That you may not think (as I find abundance of poor troubled souls do) that faith (much less justifying faith) is a believing that you have true grace, and shall be saved ; and so fall a condemning yourself unjustly every time that you doubt of your own sincerity, and think that so much as you doubt of this, so much unbelief you have : and so many poor souls complain that they have

no faith, or but little, and that they cannot believe, because they believe not their own faith to be sincere : and when they wholly judge themselves unsanctified, then they call that desperation, which they think to a sin inconsistent with true grace. These are dangerous errors, all arising from that one error which the heat of contention did carry some good men to, that faith is a belief that our sins are forgiven by Christ. Indeed all men are bound to apply Christ and the promise to themselves. But that application consisteth in a belief that this promise is true, as belonging to all, and so to me, and then in acceptance of Christ and his benefits as an offered gift ; and after this, in trusting on him for the full performance of this promise. Hence therefore you may best see what unbelief and desperation are, and how far men may charge themselves with them. When you doubt whether the promise be true, or when you refuse to accept Christ and his benefits offered in it, and consequently to trust him as one that is able and willing to save you, if you do assent to his truth, and accept him, this is unbelief. But if you do believe the truth of the Gospel, and are heartily willing to accept Christ as offered in it, and only doubt whether your belief and acceptance of him be sincere, and so whether you shall be saved ; this is not unbelief, but ignorance of your own sincerity and its consequents. Nay, and though that affiance be wanting, which is a part of faith, yet it is but an hindering of the exercise of it, for want of a necessary concomitant condition ; for the grace of affiance is in the habit, and virtually is there, so that it is not formally distrust or unbelief any more, than your not trusting God in your sleep is distrust. If a friend do promise to give you an hundred pounds, on condition that you thankfully accept it : if you now do believe him, and do thankfully accept it ; but yet through some vain scruple shall think, my thankfulness is so small, that it is not sincere, and therefore I doubt I do not perform his condition, and so shall never have the gift ; in this case now you do believe your friend, and you do not distrust him properly ; but you distrust yourself, that you perform not the condition ; and this hindereth the exercise of that confidence or affiance in your friend which is habitually and virtually in you. Just so is it in our present case.

The same may be said of desperation, which is a privation of

hope ; when we have believed the truth of the Gospel, and accepted Christ offered, we are then bound to hope that God will give us the benefits promised : so hope is nothing but a desirous expectation of the good so promised and believed. Now if you begin to distrust whether God will make good his promise or no, either thinking that it is not true, or he is not able, or hath changed his mind since the making of it, and on these grounds you let go your hopes, this is despair. If because that Christ seems to delay his coming, we should say, I have waited in hope till now, but now I am out of hope that ever Christ will come to judge the world, and glorify believers, I will expect it no longer ; this is despair. And it hath its several degrees more or less as unbelief hath. Indeed the schoolmen say that affiance is nothing but strengthened hope. Affiance in the properest sense is the same in substance as hope ; only it more expresseth a respect to the promise and promiser, and indeed is faith and hope expressed in one word. So that what I said before of distrust is true of despair. If you do continue to believe the truth of the Gospel, and particularly of Christ's coming and glorifying his saints, and yet you think he will not glorify you, because you think that you are not a true believer or saint ; this is not desperation in the proper sense. For desperation is the privation of hope, where the formal cause, the heart and life of it, is wanting. But you have here hope in the habit, and virtually do hope in Christ ; but the act of it, as to your own particular salvation is hindered, upon an accidental mistake. In the forementioned example, if your friend promise to give you an hundred pounds on condition of your thankful acceptance, and promiseth to come at such an hour and bring it you : if now you stay till the hour be almost come, and then say, ' I am out of hope of his coming now ; he hath broke his word ;' this is properly a despair in your friend. But if you only think that you have overstaid the time, and that it is past, and therefore you shall not have the gift, this may be called a despair of the event, and a despair in yourself, but not properly a despair of your friend ; only the act of hoping in God is hindered, as is said. So it is in our present case. Men may be said to despair of their salvation, and to despair in themselves, but not to despair in God, except the formal cause of such

despair were there present ; and except they are drawn to it, by not believing his truth and faithfulness. The true nature of despair is expressed in that of the apostles, Luke xxiv. 21. " We trusted that that was he that should redeem Israel ;" only it was but imperfect despair, else it had been damnable. Their hopes were shaken. And for my part, I am persuaded that it is only this proper despair in God, which is the damnable desperation, which is threatened in the Scripture, and not the former. And that if a poor soul should go out of this world without any actual hope of his own salvation, merely because he thinks that he is no true believer, that this soul may be saved, and prove a true believer for all this. Alas ! the great sin that God threateneth is our distrust of his faithfulness, and not the doubting of our own sincerity and distrust of ourselves. We have great reason to be very jealous of our own hearts, as knowing them to be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know them ? But we have no reason to be jealous of God. Where find you in Scripture that any is condemned for hard thoughts of themselves, or for not knowing themselves to have true grace, and for thinking they had none ? It is true, unbelief in God's promise is that men are condemned for, even that sin which is an aversion of the soul from God. But perhaps you will ask, Is doubting of our own sincerity and salvation no sin ? I answer, doubting is either taken in opposition to believing, or in opposition to knowing, or to conjecturing.

1. Doubting as it signifieth only a not believing that our sins are pardoned, and we shall be saved, is no sin, (still remember that I take believing in the strict, proper sense of the crediting of a divine testimony or assertion.) For God hath no where commanded us ordinarily to believe either of these. I say ordinarily (as I did in the proposition before) because when Christ was on earth he told a man personally, " Thy sins are forgiven thee ;" (whether he meant only as to the present disease inflicted for them, or also all punishment temporal and eternal, I will not now discuss) so Nathan from God told David, his sin was forgiven. But these were privileges only to these persons, and not common to all. God hath no where said, either that all men's sins are actually forgiven ; or that yours or mine by name are forgiven : but only that all that be-

lieve are forgiven, which supposeth them to believe before they are forgiven, and that they may be forgiven, and therefore it is not true that they are forgiven; before they believe. And therefore this faith is not a believing that they are forgiven, but a believing on Christ for forgiveness. Else men must believe an untruth, to make it become true by their believing it.

2. But now doubting, as it is opposed to the knowledge of our remission and justification, in those that are justified is a sin. For it can be no sin for an unjustified person to know that he is unjustified. But then I pray you mark how far it is a sin in the godly, and what manner of sin it is. 1. It is a sin, as it is part of our natural ignorance, and original depravedness of our understandings, or a fruit hereof, and of our strangeness to our own hearts, and of their deep deceitfulness, confusion, mutability, or negligence. 2. And further, as all these are increased by long custom in sinning, and so the discerning of our states is become more difficult, it is yet a greater sin. 3. It is a sin as it is the fruit of any particular sin by which we have obscured our own graces, and provoked God to hide his face from us. And so all ignorance of any truth which we ought to know, is a sin; so the ignorance of our own regeneration and sincerity is a sin, because we ought to know it. But this is so far from being the great condemning sin of unbelief which Christ threateneth in his new law, that it is none of the greatest or most heinous sort of sins, but the infirmity in some measure of every Christian.

And let me further acquaint you with this difference between these doubtings, and your fears and sorrows that follow thereupon. Though the doubtings itself be your sin, yet I suppose that the fears, and sorrows, and cares that follow it may be your duty. Yet respectively, and by remote participation, even these also must be acknowledged sinful; even as our prayers for that pardon which we have received and knew it not, may by remote participation be called sinful; because if we had not sinned we should not have been ignorant of our own hearts. And if we had not been ignorant, we should not have doubted of the least true grace we have. And if we had not so doubted, we should not have feared, or sorrowed, or prayed for that remission in that sense. But yet, though

these may be called sinful, as they come from sin, yet more nearly and in themselves considered, on supposition of our present estate, they are all duties, and great duties necessary to our salvation. You may say to a thief that begs for pardon, 'If thou hadst not stolen, thou hadst not need to have begged pardon.' Yet supposing that he hath stolen, it may be his duty to beg pardon. And so you may say to a poor, fearing soul, that fears damnation and God's wrath, 'Thou needst not fear if thou hadst not sinned.' But when he hath once by sin obscured his evidences, and necessitated doubting, then is fear, and sorrow, and praying for justification and pardon, his duty, and indeed not fitly to be called sin, but rather a fruit of sin in one respect (and so hath some participation in it) but a fruit of the Spirit, and of Christ's command in another respect, and so a necessary duty. For else we should say, that it is a sin to repent and believe in Christ, and to love him as our Redeemer; for you may say to any sinner, 'Thou needst not to have repented, believed in a Redeemer, &c. but for thy sin;' yet I hope none will say, that so doing is properly a sin, though doing them defectively is. God doth not will and approve of it, that any soul that can see no signs of grace and sincerity in itself should yet be as confident, and merry, and careless, as if they were certain that all were well. God would not have men doubt of his love, and yet make light of it. This is a contempt of him. Else what should poor, carnal sinners do that find themselves unsanctified. No, nor doth God expect that any man should judge of himself better than he hath evidence to warrant such a judgment. But that every man should "prove his own work, that so he may have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. For he that thinketh he is something when he is nothing, deceiveth himself;" Gal. vi. 3—6. And no man should be a self-deceiver, especially in a case of such inexpressible consequence. It is therefore a most desperate doctrine of the Antinomians (as most of theirs are) that all men ought to believe God's special love to them, and their own justification. And that they are justified by believing that they were justified before, and that no man ought to question his faith (saith Saltmarsh, any more than to question Christ.) And that all fears of our damnation, or not being justified after this believing, are sin; and those

that persuade to them, are preachers of the law. (How punctually do the most profane, ungodly people, hold most points of the Antinomian belief, though they never knew that sect by name !) God commandeth no man to believe more than is true, nor immediately to cast away their doubts and fears, but to overcome them in an orderly methodical way ; that is, using God's means till their graces become more discernible, and their understandings more clear and fit to discern them, that so we may have assurance of their sincerity, and thereby of our justification, adoption, and right to glorification. "Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left of entering into his rest any of us should seem to come short of it ;" Heb. iv. 1. "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice before him in trembling ; kiss the Son lest he be angry, and ye perish ;" Psal. ii. 11. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling ;" Phil. ii. 12. Not only, 1. A reverent fear of God's majesty. 2. And a filial fear of offending him. 3. And an awful fear of his judgments, when we see them executed on others, and hear them threatened. 4. And a filial fear of temporal chastisements are lawful and our duty ; but also, 5. A fear of damnation exciting to most careful importunity to escape it ; whenever we have so far obscured our evidences, as to see no strong probability of our sincerity in the faith, and so of our salvation. The sum of my speech therefore is this : Do not think that all your fears of God's wrath are your sins ; much of them is your great duty. Do you not feel that God made these fears at your first conversion, the first and a principal means of your recovery ? To drive you to a serious consideration of your state and ways, and to look after Christ with more longing and estimation ? And to use the means with more resolution and diligence ? Have not these fears been chief preservers of your diligence and integrity ever since ? I know love should do more than it doth with us all. But if we had not daily use for both (love and fear) God would not, 1. Have planted them both in our natures. 2. And have renewed them both by regenerating grace. 3. And have put into his word the objects to move both, (*viz.* threatenings as well as promises.) That fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom, includeth the fear of his threatened wrath. I could say abundance more to prove this, that I know as

to you it is needless for conviction of it ; but remember the use of it. Do not put the name of unbelief upon all your fears of God's displeasure. Much less should you presently conclude that you have no faith, and that you cannot believe, because of these fears. You may have much faith in the midst of these fears ; and God may make them preservers of your faith, by quickening you up to those means that must maintain it, and by keeping you from those evils that would be as a worm at the root of it, and eat out its precious strength and life. Security is no friend to faith, but a more deadly enemy than fear itself.

Object. ' Then Cain and Judas sinned not by despairing, or at least not damnably.'

Ans. 1. They despaired not only of themselves, and of the event of their salvation, but also of God ; of his power or goodness, and promise, and the sufficiency of any satisfaction of Christ. Their infidelity was the root of their despair. 2. Far it is from me to say or think that you should despair of the event, or that it is no sin ; yea, or that you should cherish causeless and excessive jealousies and fears. Take heed of all fears that drive you from God, or that distract or weaken your spirit, or disable you from duty, or drown your love to God, and delight in him, and destroy your apprehensions of God's loveliness and compassion, and raise black, and hard, and unworthy thoughts of God in your mind. Again, I entreat you, avoid and abhor all such fears. But if you find in you the fears of godly jealousy of your own heart, and such moderated fears of the wrath of God, which banish security, presumption, and boldness in sinning, and are (as Dr. Sibbs calls them) the awe-band of your soul ; and make you fly to the merits and bosom of the Lord Jesus, as the affrighted child to the lap of the mother, and as the man-slayer under the law to the city of refuge, and as a man pursued by a lion, to his sanctuary or hold ; do not think you have no faith, because you have these fears, but moderate them by faith and love, and then thank God for them. Indeed perfect love (which will be in heaven when all is perfected) will cast out this fear ; and so it will do sorrow and care, and prayer and means. But see you lay not these by till perfect love cast them out. See Jer. v. 22, 23. Heb. xii. two last verses. " Wherefore we

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receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire."

I am sensible that I am too large on these foregoing heads; I will purposely shorten the rest, lest I weary you.

Direct. XIX. Further understand, 'That those few who do attain to assurance, have it not either perfectly or constantly (for the most part) but mixed with imperfection, and oft clouded and interrupted.'

That the highest assurance on earth is imperfect, I have showed you elsewhere. If we be imperfect, and our faith imperfect, and the knowledge of our own hearts imperfect, and all our evidences and graces imperfect; then our assurance must needs be imperfect also. To dream of perfection on earth, is to dream of heaven on earth. And if assurance may be here perfect, why not all our graces? Even when all doubtings are overcome, yet is assurance far short of the highest degree.

Besides, that measure of assurance which godly men do partake of, hath here its many sad interruptions, in the most. Upon the prevalency of temptations, and the hidings of God's face, their souls are oft left in a state of sadness, that were but lately in the arms of Christ. How fully might this be proved from the examples of Job, David, Jeremy, and others in Scripture? And much more abundantly by the daily complaints and examples of the best of God's people now living among us. As there is no perfect evenness to be expected in our obedience while we are on earth, so neither will there be any constant or perfect evenness in our comforts. He that hath life in one duty, is cold in the next. And therefore he that hath much joy in one duty, hath little in the next. Yea, perhaps duty may but occasion the renewal of his sorrows; that the soul who before felt not its own burden at a sermon, or in prayer, or holy meditation, which were wont to revive him, now seems to feel his miseries to be multiplied. The time was once with David, when thoughts of God were sweet to him, and he could say, "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my soul." And yet he saw the time also when he remembered God and was troubled; he complained, and his spirit was overwhelmed.

God so held his eyes waking, that he was troubled and could not speak. He considered the days of old, and the years of ancient time ; he called to remembrance his song in the night, he communed with his own heart, and his spirit made diligent search. “ Will the Lord (saith he) cast off forever? And will he be favorable no more? Is his mercy clean gone forever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercy?” Was not this a low ebb, and a sad case that David was in? Till at last he saw, this was his infirmity ; Psal. lxxii. 1—10. Had David no former experiences to remind? No arguments of comfort to consider of? Yes, but there is at such a season an incapacity to improve them. There is not only a want of comfort, but a kind of averseness from it. The soul bendeth itself to break its own peace, and to put away comfort far from it. So saith he in ver. 2. “ My soul refuseth to be comforted.” In such cases men are witty to argue themselves into distress ; that it is hard for one that would comfort them to answer them ; and they are witty in repelling all the arguments of comfort that you can offer them ; so that it is hard to fasten any thing on them. They have a weak wilfulness against their own consolations.

Seeing then that best have such storms and sad interruptions, do not you wonder or think your case strange if it be so with you? Would you speed better than the best? Long for heaven then, where only is joy without sorrow, and everlasting rest without interruption.

Direct. XX. Let me also give you this warning, ‘ That you must never expect so much assurance on earth, as shall set you above the possibility of the loss of heaven ; or above all apprehensions of real danger of your miscarrying.’

I conceive this advertisement to be of great necessity. But I must first tell you the meaning, and then the reasons of it. Only I am sorry that I know not how to express it fully, but in school-terms, which are not so familiar to you. That which shall certainly come to pass, we call a thing future. That which may and can be done we call possible. All things are not future which are possible. God can do more than he hath done or will do. He could have made more worlds, and so more were possible than

were future. Moreover a thing is said to be possible, in reference to some power which can accomplish it; whether it be God's power or angel's or man's. God hath decreed that none of his elect shall finally or totally fall away and perish; and therefore their so falling and perishing is not future; that is, it is a thing that shall never come to pass. But God never decreed that it should be utterly impossible, and therefore it still remaineth possible, though it shall never come to pass.

Object. 'But it is said, 'They shall deceive, if it were possible, the very elect.'

Answer. A most comfortable place, which many opposers of election and free grace do in vain seek to obscure. But let me tell you for the right understanding of it, That as I said, possible and impossible are relative terms, and have relation to the power of some agent, as proportioned to the thing to be done. Now this text speaks only of the power of false Christs, and false prophets and the devil by them. Their power of deceiving is exceeding great, but not great enough to deceive the elect; which is true in two respects, 1. Because the elect are guided and fortified by God's Spirit. 2. Because seducers work not efficiently, but finally, by propounding objects; or by a moral, improper efficiency only. All their seducement cannot force or necessitate us to be deceived by them. But though it be impossible to them to do it, yet it is possible to God to permit (which yet he never will,) and so possible for ourselves to be our own deceivers, or to give deceivers strength against us, by a wilful receiving of their poisoned baits. 3. Besides Christ spoke not in Aristotle's school, but among the vulgar, where words must be used in the common sense, or else they will not be understood. And the vulgar use to call that impossible which shall never come to pass.

There is a consequential impossibility of the event, because it is directly impossible that God should be mutable or deceived; even as contingents may be consequentially and accidentally necessary. But in its own nature, alas our apostacy is more than possible.

And indeed when we say that it is possible or impossible for a man to sin or fall away, there is some degree of impropriety in the terms, because possible and impossible are terms properly relating

to some power apportioned to a work ; but sinning and falling away thereby, are the consequents of impotency, and not the effects of power ; except we speak of the natural act, wherein the sin abideth. But this must be borne with, for want of a fitter word to express our meaning by. But I will leave these things which are not fit for you, and desire you to leave them and overpass them, if you understand them not.

I here told you also, that you must not look to be above all apprehension of danger of your miscarrying. The grounds of this are these : 1. Because as is said, our miscarrying remaineth still possible. 2. Because the perfect, certain knowledge of our election, and that we shall not fall away, is proper to God only ; we have ourselves but a defective, interrupted assurance of it. 3. The covenant gives us salvation but on condition of our perseverance, and perseverance on condition that we quench not the Spirit, which we shall do if we lose the apprehension of our danger. 4. Accordingly there is a connexion in our assurance, between all the several causes of our salvation, and necessities thereto ; whereof the apprehension of danger is one. We are sure we shall be saved, if we be sure to persevere ; else not. We are sure to persevere, if we be sure faithfully to resist temptations. We can be no surer of faithful resisting of temptations, than we are sure to be kept in an apprehension of our danger.

I still say therefore, that the doctrine of Antinomians is the most ready way to apostacy and perdition ; and no wonder if it lead to licentiousness and scandals, which our eyes have seen to be its genuine fruits ! They cry down the weakness, unbelief, and folly of poor Christians, that will apprehend themselves in danger of falling away, and so live in fear, after they are once justified ; and that if they fall into sin (as whoredom, drunkenness, murder, perjury, destroying the ministry, and expelling the Gospel, &c.), will presently question or fear their estates and their justification. Such like passages I lately read in some printed sermons of one of my ancient acquaintance, who would never have come to that pass that he is at now, if his judgment and humility had been as great as his zeal. I entreat you therefore never to expect such an assurance as shall extinguish all your apprehensions of danger. He

that sees not the danger, is nearest it, and likely to fall into it. Only he that seeth and apprehendeth it, is likely to avoid it. He that seeth no danger of falling away, is in greatest danger of it. I doubt not but that is the cause of the seditions, scandals, heresies, blood-guiltiness, destroyers of the churches of Christ, and most horrid apostacies, hypocrisy, and wickedness, which these late times have been guilty of; and they apprehended not the danger of ever coming into such a state, or ever doing such things, but would have said, 'Am I a dog?' to him that should have foretold them what is come to pass. Wonderful! that men should be so blinded by false doctrine, as not to know that the apprehension of danger is made in the very fabrication of the nature of man, to be the very engine to move his soul in all ways of self-preservation and salvation! Yea, it is that very supposed principle upon which all the government of the world, and the laws and order of every nation, are grounded. We could not keep the very brotes from tearing us in pieces, but for their own safety, because they apprehended themselves to be in danger by it. The fear of man is that restraineth them. But for this, no man's life would be in any safety, for every malicious man would be a murderer. He that feareth not the loss of his own life, is master of another man's. Do these men think that the apprehension of bodily dangers may carry them on through all undertakings, and be the potent string of most of their actions, and warrant all those courses that else would be unwarrantable, so that they dare plead necessity to warrant those fearful things which by extenuating language (like Saul's) are called irregularities! And yet that it is unlawful or unmeet for a Christian, yea the weakest Christian, to live in any apprehensions of danger to their soul: either danger of sinning, or falling away, or perishing for ever? No wonder if such do sin, and fall away and perish. Would these men have fought well by sea or land, if they had apprehended no danger? Would the earth have been so covered with carcasses, and with blood (yea, even of saints) and the world filled with the doleful calamities that accompanied and have followed, if there had been no apprehensions of danger? Would they take physic when they are sick? Would they avoid fire or water, or thieves, but through an apprehension of danger? Let them talk

what they please, if ever they escape hell, without a deep apprehension of the danger of it, it must be in a way not known by Scripture, or by nature. Sure I am Paul did tame his body, and bring it into subjection, through an apprehension of this danger, lest when he had preached to others, himself should be a castaway or reprobate? 2 Cor. ix. 27. And Christ himself, when he biddeth us "fear not them that can kill the body," (whom yet these men think it lawful to fear and fight against) yet chargeth us with a double charge, to "fear him that is able to destroy both body and soul in hell: yea, I say unto you, (saith Christ,) fear him;" Luke xii. 5. What can be plainer? and to his disciples? My detestation of these destructive Antinomian principles, makes me to run out further against them than I intended; though it were easy more abundantly to manifest their hatefulness. But my reasons are these: 1. Because the mountebanks are still thrusting in themselves, and impudently proclaiming their own skill, and the excellency of their remedies for the cure of wounded consciences, and the settling of peace; when indeed their receipts are rank poison, gilded with the precious name of Christ, and free grace. 2. Because I would not have your doubtings cured by the devil; for he will but cure one disease with another, and a lesser with a far greater. If he can so cure your fears and doubtings, as to bring you into carnal security and presumption, he will lose nothing by the cure, and you will get nothing. If he can turn a poor, doubting, troubled Christian to be a secure Antinomian, he hath cured the smart of a cut finger by casting them into a lethargy, or stupefaction by his opium. To go to Antinomian receipts to cure a troubled soul, is as going to a witch to cure the body. 3. I would have you sensible of God's goodness to you, in these very troubles that you have so long laid under. Your blessed physician knew your disease, and the temperature of your soul. Perhaps he saw that you were in some danger of being carried away with the honors, profits, or treasures of this world; and would have been entangled in either covetousness, pride, voluptuousness, or some such desperate sin. And now by these constant and extraordinary apprehensions of your danger, these sins have been much kept under, temptations weakened, and your danger prevented. If you have found

no such inclinations in yourself, yet God might find them. Had it not been far worse for you to have lain so many years in pride, sensuality, and forgetfulness of God, and utter neglect of the state of your soul, than to have lain so long as you have done in the apprehensions of your danger? O love and admire your wise Physician! Little do you know now what he hath been doing for you; nor shall you ever fully know it in this life; but hereafter you shall know it, when your sanctification, and consolation and his praises shall be perfected together. 4. If you should for the time to come, expect or desire that God should set you out of all apprehension of danger, you know not what it is that you desire. It were to desire your own undoing. Only see that you apprehend not your danger to be greater than it is; nor so apprehend it as to increase it, by driving you from Christ, but as to prevent it by driving you to him. Entertain not fancies and dreams of danger, instead of right apprehensions. Apprehend your happiness and grounds of hope and comfort, and safety in Christ, and let these quite exceed your apprehensions of the danger. Look not on it as a remediless danger, or as greater than the remedy. Do not conclude that you shall perish in it, and it will swallow you up. But only let it make you hold fast on Christ, and keep close to him in obedience. Shall I lay open all the matter expressed in this section, by familiar comparison?

A king having many subjects and sons, which are all beyond sea, or beyond some river, they must needs be brought over to him before they can live or reign with him. The river is frozen over at the sides, till it come almost to the middle. The foolish children are all playing on the ice, where a deceiving enemy enticeth them to play on till they come to the deep, where they drop in one by one and perish. The eldest son, who is with the father on the other side, undertaketh to cast himself into the water, and swim to the further side, and break the ice, and swim back with them all that will come with him and hold him. The father bids him, 'Bring all my subjects with you, if they will come and hold by you; but be sure you fail not to bring my sons.' This is resolved on; the prince casteth himself into the water, and swimmeth to the further side. He maketh a way through the ice, and offereth all of them

his safe carriage, if they will accept him to be their bearer and helper, and will trust themselves on him, and hold fast by him till they come to the further side. Some refuse his help, and think he would deceive them, and lead them into the deep, and there leave them to perish. Some had rather play on the ice, and will not hearken to him. Some dare not venture through the stream, or will not endure the coldness of the water. Some waveringly agree to him, and hold faintly by his skirt; and when they feel the cold water, or are near the deep, or are weary of holding, they lose him; either turning back, or perishing suddenly in the gulf. The children are of the same mind with the rest; but he is resolved to lose none of them, and therefore he chargeth them to come with him, and tells them fully what a welcome they shall have with their father; and ceaseth not his importunity till he persuade them to consent. Some of them say, 'How shall we ever get over the river? we shall be drowned by the way.' He tells them, 'I will carry you safe over, so you will but hold fast by me. Never fear, I warrant you.' They all lay hold on him, and venture in with him. When they are in the midst some are afraid, and cry out, 'We shall be drowned.' These he encourageth, and bids them trust him; hold fast, and fear not. Others, when they hear these words, that they need not fear, grow so bold and utterly secure, as to lose their hold. To these he speaketh in other language, and chargeth them to hold fast by him; for if they lose their hold, they will fall into the bottom, and if they stick not to him they will be drowned. Some of them upon this warning hold fast; others are so boldly confident of his skill, and good will, and promise, that they forget or value not his warning and threatening, but lose their hold. Some through laziness and weariness do the like. Whereupon he lets them sink till they are almost drowned, and cry out for help, "Save us or we perish," and think they are all lost; and then he layeth hold of them and fetcheth them up again, and chideth them for their bold folly, and biddeth them look better to themselves, and hold faster by him hereafter, if they love themselves. Some at last, through mere weariness and weakness, before they can reach the bank, cry out, 'O I am tired, I faint, I shall never hold fast till I reach the shore, I shall be drowned.' These

he comforteth, and gives them cordials, and holdeth them by the hand, and bids them, Despair not : Do your best : Hold fast,² and I will help you. And so he brings them all safe to the haven.

This king is God ; heaven is his habitation ; the subjects are all men ; the sons, who are part of the subjects, are the elect ; the rest are the non-elect ; the river or sea is the passage of this life. The further side is all men's natural, sinful distance and separation from God and happiness ; the ice that bears them, is this frail life of pleasures, profits, and honors, which delight the flesh ; the depth unfrozen is hell ; he that enticeth them thither is the devil. The eldest son that is sent to bring them over, is Jesus Christ ; his commission and undertaking is, to help all over that refuse not his help ; and to see that the elect be infallibly recovered and saved. Do I need to go over the other particulars ? I know you see my meaning in them all : especially that which I aim at is this ; that as Paul had a promise of the life of all that were with him in the ship, and yet when some would have gone out, he told them, " Except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved," Acts xxvii. 31. (so that he makes their apprehension of danger in a possibility of being drowned, to be the means of detaining them in the ship till they came all safe to land) so Jesus Christ who will infallibly save all his elect (they being given him by his Father to be infallibly saved) will do it by causing them to hold fast by him through all the troubles, and labors, and temptations of this tumultuous, tempestuous world, and that till they come to land ; and the apprehension of their dangers shall be his means to make them hold fast ; yet is not their safety principally in themselves, but in him : nor is it their holding fast by him that is the chief cause of their difference from those that perish, but that is his love and resolution to save them. And therefore when they do let go their hold, he will not so lose them, but will fetch them up again ; only he will not bring them through the sea of danger as you would draw a block through the water ; but as men that must hold fast, and be commanded and threatened to that end ; and therefore when they lose their hold, it is the fear of drowning which they felt themselves near, which shall cause them to hold faster the next time ; and this must needs be the fear of a possible danger. And for those that perish, they have none to blame but themselves. They perish not for want of

a Savior, but because they would not lay hold on him, and follow him through the tempests and waves of trial. Nor can they quarrel at him because he did more for others, and did not as much for them as long as he offered them so sufficient help, that only their own wilful refusal was their ruin, and their perdition was of themselves.

I conclude therefore, that seeing our salvation is laid by God, upon our faithful holding fast to Christ through all trials and difficulties, and our holy fear is the means of our holding fast (Christ being still the principal cause of our safety,) therefore never look for such a certainty of salvation, as shall put you above such fears and moderated apprehensions of danger ; for then it is ten to one you will lose your hold. You read in Scripture very many warnings to take heed lest we fall, and threatenings to those that do fall away and draw back. What are all these for, but to excite in us those moderate fears, and cares, and holy diligence, which may prevent our falling away ? And remember this, that there can be no such holy fears, and cares, and diligence, where there is no danger or possibility of falling away ; for there can be no act without its proper object ; and the object of fear is a possible hurt, at least in the apprehension of him that feareth it. No man can fear the evil which he knoweth to be impossible.

Direct. XXI. The next advice which I must give you, is this, ‘ Be thankful if you can but reach to a settled peace, and composure of your mind, and lay not too much on the high raptures and feelings of comfort which some do possess : and if ever you enjoy such feeling joys, expect not that they should be either long or often.’

It is the cause of miserable languishing to many a poor soul, to have such importunate expectations of such passionate joys, that they think without these they have no true comfort at all ; no witness of the Spirit, no spirit of adoption, no joy in the Holy Ghost. Some think that others have much of this, though they have not, and therefore they torment themselves because it is not with them as with others ; when, alas, they little know how it goes with others. Some taste of such raptures sometimes themselves have had, and therefore when they are gone, they think they are forsaken,

and that all grace, or peace at least is gone with them. Take heed of these expectations. And to satisfy you, let me tell you these two or three things : 1. A settled calm and peace of soul is a great mercy, and not to be undervalued as nothing. 2. The highest raptures and passionate feeling joys, are usually of most doubtful sincerity. Not that I would have any suspect the sincerity of them without cause ; but such passions are not so certain signs of grace, as the settled frame of the understanding and will ; nor can we so easily know that they are of the Spirit, and they are liable to more questioning, and have in them a greater possibility of deceit. Doubtless it is very much that fancy and melancholy, and especially a natural weakness and moveable temper will do in such cases. Mark whether it be not mostly these three sorts of people that have or pretend to have such extraordinary raptures and feelings of joy. (1.) Women and others that are most passionate. (2.) Melancholy people. (3.) Men that by erroneous opinions have lost almost all their understandings in their fancies, and live like men in a continual dream. Yet I doubt not but solid men have oft high joys ; and more we might all have, if we did our duty. And I would have no Christian content himself with a dull quietness of spirit, but by all means possible to be much in laboring to rejoice in God and raising their souls to heavenly delights. O what lives do we lose, which we might enjoy ! But my meaning is this ; look at these joys and delights as duties and as mercies, but look not at them as marks of trial, so as to place more necessity in them than God hath done, or to think them to be ordinary things. If you do but feel such a high estimation of Christ and heaven, that you would not leave him for all the world, take this for your surest sign. And if you have but so much probability or hope of your interest in him, that you can think of God as one that loveth you, and can be thankful to Christ for redeeming you, and are more glad in these hopes of your interest in Christ and glory, than if you were owner of all the world ; take this for a happy mercy, and a high consolation. Yet I mean not that your joy in Christ will be always so sensible, as for worldly things ; but it will be more rational, solid and deeper at the heart. And that you may know by this, you would not for all the pleasures, honors or profits in the world, be in the same case

as once you were (supposing that you were converted since you had the use of reason and memory,) or at least as you see the ungodly world still lie in.

3. And let me add this : commonly those that have the highest passionate joys, have the saddest lives ; for they have withal, the most passionate fears and sorrows. Mark it, whether you find not this prove true. And it is partly from God's will in his dispensations ; partly from their own necessities, who after their exaltations do usually need a prick in the flesh, and a minister of satan to buffet them, lest they be exalted above measure ; and partly, and most commonly ; it is from the temperature of their bodies. Weak, passionate women, of moveable spirits and strong affections, when they love, they love violently, and when they rejoice, especially in such cases, they have most sensible joys, and when any fears arise, they have most terrible sorrows. I know it is not so with all of that sex ; but mark the same people that usually have the highest joys, and see whether at other times they have not the greatest troubles. This week they are as at the gates of heaven, and the next as at the doors of hell : I am sure, with many it is so. Yet it need not be so, if Christians would but look at these high joys as duties to be endeavored, and mercies to be valued ; but when they will needs judge of their state by them, and think that God is gone from them or forsaken them, when they have not such joys, then it leaves them in terror and amazement. Like men after a flash of lightning, that are left more sensible of the darkness. For no wise man can expect that such joys should be a Christian's ordinary state ; or God should so diet us with a continual feast. It would neither suit with our health, nor the condition of this pilgrimage. Live therefore on your peace of conscience as your ordinary diet ; when this is wanting, know that God appointeth you a fast for your health ; and when you have a feast of high joys, feed on it and be thankful ; but when they are taken from you, gape not after them as the disciples did after Christ at his ascension ; but return thankfully to your ordinary diet of peace. And remember that these joys, which are now taken from you, may so return again. However, there is a place preparing for you, where your joys shall be full.

Direct. XXII. My next Direction is this, 'Spend more of your time and care about your duty than about your comforts : and for the exercise and increase of your graces, than for the discovery of them : and when you have done all that you can for assurance and comfort, you shall find that it will very much depend on your actual obedience.'

This Direction is of as great importance as any that I have yet given you ; but I shall say but little of it, because I have spoke of it so fully already in my Book of Rest, Part iii. Chap. 8—11. My reasons for what I here assert are these : 1. Duty goeth in order of nature and time, before comfort, as the precept is before the promise : comfort is part of the reward, and therefore necessarily supposeth the duty. 2. Grace makes men both so ingenious and divine, as to consider God's due as well as their own ; and what they should do, as well as what they shall have, still remembering that our works cannot merit at God's hands. 3. As we must have grace before we can know we have it, so ordinarily we must have a good measure of grace, before we can so clearly discern it as to be certain of it. Small things, I have told you, are next to none, and hardly discernible by weak eyes. When all ways in the world are tried, it will be found that there is no way so sure for a doubting soul to be made certain of the truth of his graces, as to keep them in action and get them increased. And it will be found that there is no one cause of Christians doubting of the truth of their faith, love, hope, repentance, humility, &c. so great or so common as the small degree of these graces. Doth not the very language of complaining Christians shew this ? One saith, 'I have no faith ; I cannot believe ; I have no love to God ; I have no delight in duty.' Another saith, 'I cannot mourn for sin, my heart was never broken ; I cannot patiently bear an injury ; I have no courage in opposing sin, &c.' If all these were not in a low and weak degree, men could not so ordinarily think they had none. A lively, strong, working faith, love, zeal, courage, &c. would shew themselves, as do the highest towers, the greatest mountains, the strongest winds, the greatest flames, which will force an observance by their greatness and effects. 4. Consider also that it is more pleasing to God to see his people study him and his will directly, than to spend the

first and chiefest of their studies about the attaining of comforts to themselves. 5. And it is the nature of grace to tend first and chiefly toward God ; and but secondarily to be the evidence of our own happiness. We have faith given us principally that we might believe, and live by it in daily applications of Christ : we have repentance, that it might break us off from sin, and bring us back to God ; we have love, that we might love God and our Redeemer, his saints, and laws, and ways ; we have zeal, that we might be quickened in all our holy duties ; and we have obedience, to keep us in the way of duty. The first thing we have to do with these graces, is to use them for those holy ends which their nature doth express : and then the discerning of them that we may have assurance, followeth after this both in time and dignity. 6. And it is a matter of far greater concernment to ourselves to seek after the obtaining of Christ and grace, than after the certain knowledge that we have them. You may be saved though you never get assurance here, but you cannot be saved without Christ and grace. God hath not made assurance the condition of your salvation. It tends indeed exceedingly to your comfort, and a precious mercy it is ; but your safety lieth not on it. It is better to go sorrowful and doubting to heaven, than comfortably to hell. First therefore ask what is the condition of salvation and the way to it, and then look that you do your best to perform it, and to go that way, and then try your performance in its season. 7. Besides, as it is a work of far greater moment, so also of quicker dispatch, to believe and love Christ truly, than to get assurance that you do truly believe and love him. You may believe immediately, (by the help of God's grace,) but getting assurance of it may be the work of a great part of your life. Let me therefore entreat this one thing of you, that when you feel the want of any grace, you would not presently bend all your thoughts upon the inquiry, whether it be true or no ; but rather say to yourself, ' I see trying is a great and difficult, a long and tedious work : I may be this many years about it, and possibly be unresolved still. If I should conclude that I have no grace, I may be mistaken ; and so I may if I think that I have it. I may inquire of friends and ministers long, and yet be left in doubt ; it is therefore my surest way to seek presently to ob-

tain it, if I have it not, and to increase it if I have it. And I am certain none of that labor will be lost; to get more is the way to know I have it.'

But perhaps you will say, 'How should I get more grace? That is a business of greater difficulty than so.' I answer, Understand what I told you before, that as the beginning of grace is in your understanding, so the heart and life of it is in your will; and the affections and passionate part are but the fruits and branches. If therefore your grace be weak, it is chiefly in an unwillingness to yield to Christ, and his word and Spirit. Now, how should an unwilling soul be made willing? Why thus, 1. Pray constantly as you are able, for a willing mind, and yielding, inclinable heart to Christ. 2. Hear constantly those preachers that bend their doctrine to inform your understanding of the great necessity and excellency of Christ, and grace, and glory; and to persuade the will with the most forcible arguments. A persuading, quickening ministry, that helps to excite your graces, and draw up your heart to Christ, is more useful than they that spend most of their time to persuade you of your sincerity, and give you comfort. 3. But especially lay out your thoughts more in the most serious considerations of those things which tend to breed and feed those particular graces which you would have increased. Objects and moving reasons kept much upon the mind by serious thoughts, are the great engine appointed both by nature and by grace, to turn about the soul of man. Thoughts are to your soul, as taking in the air, and meat and drink to your body. Objects considered, do turn the soul into their own nature. Such as are the things that you most think and consider of (I mean in pursuance of them,) such will you be yourself. Consideration, frequent serious consideration, is God's great instrument to convert the soul, and to confirm it; to get grace, and to keep it, and increase it. If any soul perish for want of grace, it is ten to one it is mainly for want of frequent and serious consideration. That the most of us do languish under such weaknesses, and attain to small degrees of grace, is for want of sober, frequent consideration. We know not how great things this would do, if it were but faithfully managed. This then is my advice, when you feel so great a want of faith and love (for those be

the main graces for trial and use,) that you doubt whether you have any or none, lay by those doubting thoughts awhile, and presently go and set yourself to consider of God's truth, goodness, amiableness, and kindheartedness to miserable, unworthy sinners; think what he is in himself, and what he is to you, and what he hath done for you, and what he will do for you if you will but consent. And then think of the vanity of all the childish pleasures of this world; how soon, and in how sad a case they will leave us; and what silly, contemptible things they are, in comparison of the everlasting glory of the saints! By that time you have warmed your soul a little with such serious thoughts, you will find your faith and love revive, and begin to stir and work within you; and then you will feel that you have faith and love. Only remember what I told you before, that the heart and soul of saving faith and love (supposing a belief that the Gospel is true,) is all in this one act of willingness and consent to have Christ as he is offered. Therefore if you doubt of your faith and love, it is your own willingness that you doubt of, or else you know not what you do. Now methinks, if you took but a sober view of the goodness of God, and the glory of heaven on one side, and of the silly, empty, worthless world on the other side; and then ask your heart which it will choose; and say to yourself, 'O my soul, the God of glory offers thee thy choice of dung and vanity for a little time, or of the unconceivable joys of heaven for ever: which wilt thou choose?' I say, methinks the answer of your soul should presently resolve you, that you do believe, and that you love God above this present world! For if you can choose him before the world, then you are more willing of him than the world: and if he have more of your will, for certain that he hath more of your faith and love. Use, therefore, instead of doubting of your faith, to believe till you put it out of doubt. And if yet you doubt, study God and Christ, and glory yet better, and keep those objects by consideration close to your heart, whose nature is to work the heart to faith and love. For certainly objects have a mighty power on the soul; and certainly God, and Christ, and grace, and glory, are mighty objects; as able to make a full and deep impression on man's soul, as any in the world; and if they work not, it is not through any imperfection in them, but because they be not well ap-

plied, and by consideration held upon the heart, that they may work. Perhaps you will say, that meditation is too hard a work for you, and that your memory is so weak that you want matter to meditate upon; or if you do meditate on these, yet you feel no great motion or alteration on your heart. To this I answer; if you want matter, take the help of some book that will afford you matter; and if you want life in meditation, peruse the most quickening writings you can get. If you have not better at hand, read over (and seriously consider as you read it,) those passages in the end of my Book of Rest, which direct you in the exercises of these graces, and give you some matter for your meditation to work upon: and remember, that if you can increase the resolved choice of your will, you increase your love, though you feel not those affectionate workings that you desire.

Let me ask you now whether you have indeed taken this course in your doubtings? If not, how unwisely have you done. Doubting is no cure, but actual believing and loving is a cure. If faith and love were things that you would fain get, but cannot, then you had cause enough to fear, and to lie down and rise up in trouble of mind from one year to another. But it is no such matter; it is so far from being beyond your reach or power to have these graces, though you would, that they themselves are nothing else but your very willingness; at least your willingness to have Christ, is both your faith and love. It may be said therefore to be in the power of your will, which is nothing else but that actual willingness which you have already. If therefore you are unwilling to have him, what makes you complain for want of the sense of his presence, and the assurance of his love, and the graces of his Spirit, as you frequently do? It is strange to me, that people should make so many complaints to God and men, and spend so many sad hours in fears and trouble, and all for want of that which they would not have. If you be not willing, be willing now. If you say you cannot, do as I have before directed you. One hour's sober, serious thoughts of God and the world, of Christ and satan, of sin and holiness, of heaven and hell, and the differences of them, will do very much to make you willing. Yet mistake me not; though I say you may have Christ if you will, and faith and love if you will, and no

man can truly say, 'I would be glad to have Christ (as he is offered) but cannot ;' yet this gladness, consent, or willingness which I mention, is the effect of the special work of the Spirit, and was not in your power before you had it ; nor is it yet so in your power as to believe, without God's further helping you. But he that hath made you willing, will not be wanting to maintain your willingness. Though I will say to any man, You may have Christ if you will ; yet I will say to no man, You can be willing of yourself, or without the special grace of God.

Nay, let me further ask ; Have you not darkened, buried, or weakened your graces, instead of exercising and increasing them, even then when you complained for want of assurance of them ? When you found a want of faith and love, have not you weakened them more, and so made them less discernible ? Have you not fed your unbelief, and disputed for your doubtings, and taken Satan's part against yourself ; and (which is far worse) have you never, through these doubtings, entertained hard thoughts of God, and presented him to your soul, as unwilling to shew you mercy, and in an unlovely, dreadful, hideous shape, fitter to affright you from him, than to draw you to him and likelier to provoke your hatred than your love ? If you have not done thus, I know too many troubled souls that have. And if you have, you have taken a very unlikely way to get assurance. If you would have been certain that you loved God in sincerity, you should have labored to love him more, till you had been certain ; and that you might do so, you should have kept better thoughts of God in your mind. You will hardly love him while you think of him as evil, or at least as hurtful to you. Never forgot this rule which I lay you down in the beginning, that He that will ever love God, must apprehend him to be good. And the more large and deep are our apprehensions of his goodness, the more will be our love. For such as God appears to be to men's fixed conceivings, such will their affections be to him. For the fixed, deep conceptions, or apprehensions of the mind, do lead about the soul, and guide the life.

I conclude therefore with this important and importunate request to you, that, Though it be a duty necessary in its time and place, to examine ourselves concerning our sincerity, in our several graces

and duties to God ; yet be sure that the first and far greater part of your time, and pains, and care, and inquiries, be for the getting and increasing of your grace, than for the discerning it ; and to perform your duty rightly, than to discern your right performance. And when you confer with ministers, or others, that may teach you, see that you ask ten times at least, ‘ How should I get or increase my faith, my love to Christ, and to his people ? ’ for once that you ask, ‘ How shall I know that I believe or love ? ’ Yet so contrary hath been, and still is, the practice of most Christians among us in this point, that I have heard it twenty times asked, ‘ How shall I know that I truly love the brethren ? ’ for once that I have heard it demanded, ‘ How should I bring my heart to love them better ? And the like I may say of love to Christ himself.

I should next have spoken of the second part of the Direction, How much our assurance and comfort will still depend on our actual obedience. But this will fall in, in handling the two or three next following Directions.

Direct. XXIII. My next advice is this, ‘ Think not those doubts and troubles of mind, which are caused and continued by wilful disobedience, will ever be well healed but by the healing of that disobedience ; or that the same means must be used, and will suffice to the cure of such troubles ; which must be used, and will suffice to cure the troubles of a tender conscience, and of an obedient Christian, whose trouble is merely through mistakes of their condition.’

I will begin with the latter part of this Direction. He that is troubled upon mere mistakes, may be quieted upon the removal of them. If he understood not the universal extent of Christ’s satisfaction, or of the covenant or conditional grant of Christ and life in him ; and if upon this he be troubled, as thinking that he is not included, the convincing him of his error may suffice to the removal of his trouble. If he be troubled through his mistaking the nature of true faith, or true love, or other graces, and so think that he hath them not, when he hath them, the discovery of his error may be the quieting of his soul. The soul that is troubled upon such mistakes, must be tenderly dealt with. Much more they that are disquieted by groundless fears, or too deep apprehensions of the wrath

or justice of God, of the evil of sin, and of their unworthiness, and for want of fuller apprehensions of the loving kindness of God, and the tender, compassionate nature of Christ. We can scarce handle such souls too gently. God would have all to be tenderly dealt with, that are tender of displeasing and dishonoring him by sin. God's own language may teach all ministers what language we should use to such, Isa. lvii. 15—21. "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth. For the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made, &c. But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." Much more tender language may such expect from Christ in the Gospel, where is contained a fuller revelation of his grace. If Mary, a poor, sinful woman, lie weeping at his feet, and washing them with her tears, he hath not the heart to spurn her away ; but openly proclaims the forgiveness of her many sins. As soon as ever the heart of a sinner is turned from his sins, the heart of Christ is turned to him. The very sum of all the Gospel is contained in those precious words, which fully express this : "Come unto me all ye that labor, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light ;" Matt. xi. 28—30. When the prodigal (Luke xv. 20.) doth once come home to his father, with sorrow and shame, confessing his unworthiness, yea, but resolved to confess it ; his father preventeth him, and sees him afar off, and stays not his coming, but runs and meets him. And when he comes to him, he doth not upbraid him with his sins, nor say, Thou rebel, why hast thou forsaken me, and preferred harlots and luxury before me ? Nay, he doth not so much as frown upon him, but compassionately falls on his neck and kisseth him. Alas, God knows that a poor sinner in this humbled, troubled case, hath burden enough on his back already, and indeed more than he is able of himself to

bear. The sense of his own sinful folly and misery is burden enough. If God should add to this his frowns and terrors, and should spurn at a poor sinner that lies prostrate at his feet, in tears or terrors, who then should be able to stand before him, or to look him in the face? But he will not break the bruised reed; he will not make heavier the burden of a sinner. He calls them to come to him for ease and rest, and not to oppress them, or kill them with terrors. We have not a king like Rehoboam, that will multiply our pressures; but one whose office it is to break our yokes, and loose our bonds, and set us free. When he was a preacher himself on earth, you may gather what doctrines he preached by his text, which he chose at one of his first public sermons; which, as you may find in Luke iv. 18, 19. was this, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." O if a poor, bruised, wounded soul, had but heard this sermon from his Saviour's own mouth, what heart-meltings would it have caused? What pangs of love would it have raised in him? You would sure have believed then that the Lord is gracious, when "all (that heard him) bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words that proceeded out of his mouth;" Luke iv. 22. I would desire no more for the comfort of such a soul, than to see such a sight, and feel such a feeling as the poor penitent prodigal did, when he found himself in the arms of his father, and felt the kisses of his mouth, and was surprised so unexpectedly with such a torrent of love. The soul that hath once seen and felt this, would never sure have such hard and doubtful thoughts of God, except through ignorance they knew not whose arms they were that thus embraced them, or whose voice it was that thus bespoke them; or unless the remembrance of it were gone out of their minds. You see then what is God's own language to humbled penitents, and what is the method of his dealings with them; and such must be the language and dealing of his ministers: they must not wound when Christ would heal; nor

make sad the heart that Christ would comfort, and would not have made sad ; Ezek. xiii. 22.

But will this means serve turn, or must the same course be taken to remove the sorrows of the wilfully disobedient? No ; God takes another course himself, and prescribes another course to his ministers ; and requires another course from the sinner himself. But still remember who it is that I speak of : it is not the ordinary, unavoidable infirmities of the saints that I speak of ; such as they cannot be rid of, though they fain would ; such as Paul speaks of, Rom. vii. 19. "The good that I would do, I do not : " and "when I would do good, evil is present with me." And Gal. v. 17. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, &c. so that we cannot do the things we would." A true Christian would love God more perfectly, and delight in him more abundantly, and bring every thought in subjection to his will, and subdue the very remnants of carnal concupiscence, that there should be no stirrings of lust or unjust anger, or worldly desires, or pride within him ; and that no vain word might pass his lips : all this he would do, but he cannot. Striving against these unavoidable infirmities, is conquering.

But though we cannot keep under every motion of concupiscence, we can forbear the execution. Anger will stir up provocations ; but we may restrain it in degree, that it set us not in a flame, and do not much distemper or discompose our minds. And we can forbid our tongues all raging, furious, or abusive words in our anger ; all cursing, swearing, or reproachful speaking. If an envious thought against one brother do arise in our hearts, because he is preferred before us, we may hate it and repress it, and chide our hearts for it, and command our tongues to speak well of him, and no evil. Some pride and self-esteem will remain and be stirring in us, do what we can ; it is a sin so deeply rooted in our corrupt natures. But yet we can detest it, and resist it, and meet it with abhorrence of our self-conceited thoughts, and rejoicings in our own reputations and fame, and inward heart-risings against those that undervalue us, and stand in the way of our repute ; and we may forbear our boasting language, and our contestings for our credit, and our excuses of our sins, and our backbitings and secret

defaming of those that cross us in the way of credit. We may forbear our quarrels, and estrangements, and dividings from our brethren, and stiff insisting on our own conceits, and expecting that others should make our judgments their rule, and say and do as we would have them, and all dance after our pipe ; all which are the effects of inward pride. We cannot, while we are on earth, be free from all inordinate love of the world, and the riches and honors of it ; but we may so watch against and repress it, as that it shall neither be preferred before God, nor draw us to unlawful ways of gain, by lying, deceit, and overreaching our brethren ; by stealing, unjust or unmerciful dealings, oppressing the poor, and insulting over those that are in the way of our thriving, and crushing them that would hinder our aspiring designs, and treading them down that will not bow to us, and taking revenge of them that have crossed or disparaged us, or cruelly exacting all our rights and debts of the poor, and squeezing the purses of subjects or tenants, or those that we bargain with, like a sponge, as long as any thing will come out. Yea, we may so far subdue our love of the world, as that it shall not hinder us from being merciful to the poor, compassionate to our servants and laborers, and bountiful to our power in doing good works ; nor yet shut out God's service from our families and closets ; nor rob him of our frequent, affectionate thoughts, especially on the Lord's day. So for sensuality, or the pleasing of our flesh more immediately ; we shall never on earth be wholly freed from inordinate motions, and temptations, and fleshly desires, and urgent inclinations and solicitations to forbidden things. But yet we may restrain our appetite by reason, so far that it brings us not to gluttony and drunkenness, and a studying for our bellies, and pampering of our flesh, or a taking care for it, and making provision to satisfy its lusts ; Rom. xiii. 14. We may forbear the obeying it, in excess of apparel, in indecent, scandalous, or time-wasting recreations, in uncleanness, or unchaste speeches or behavior, or the reading of amorous books and sonnets, or feeding our eyes or thoughts on filthy or enticing objects, or otherwise wilfully blowing the fire of lust. So also for the performance of duty. We shall never in this life be able to hear or read so diligently, and understandingly, or affectionately, as we would do ; nor to remember or profit by

what we hear, as we desire. But yet we can bring ourselves to the congregation, and not prefer our ease, or business, or any vain thing before God's word and worship, or loathe or despise it, because of some weakness in the speaker. And we may in a great measure restrain our thoughts from wandering, and force ourselves to attend; and labor when we come home to recal it to mind. We cannot call on God so fervently, believingly, or delightfully, as we would; but yet we may do it as sincerely as we can, and do it constantly. We cannot instruct our children and servants, and reprove or exhort our neighbors, with that boldness, or love, and compassion, and discretion, and meet expressions, as we would; but yet we may do it faithfully and frequently as we are able.

So that you may see in all this, what sin it is that Paul speaks of, Rom. vii. when he saith, When he would do good, evil is present with him; and that he is led captive to the law of sin, and serves the law of sin with his flesh. And Gal. iv. 17. when he saith, "We cannot do the things that we would," he speaks not of wilful sinning or gross sin, but of unavoidable infirmities; whereby also we are too often drawn into a committing of many sins which we might avoid (for so the best do.)

And because you may often read and hear of sins of infirmity, as distinguished from other sins, let me here give you notice, that this word may be taken in several senses, and that there are three several sorts of infirmity in the godly.

1. There are those sins which a man cannot avoid though he would; which are in the gentlest sense called sins of infirmity. Here note, first, that Adam had none such: and secondly, that the reason of them is, because, 1. Our reason which should direct, and our wills themselves which should command, are both imperfect. 2. And our faculties that should be commanded and directed, are by sin grown impotent and obstinate, and have contracted a rebelling, disobedient disposition. 3. And that degree of grace, which the best attain to in this life, is not such as wholly to overcome either the imperfection of the guiding and commanding faculty, or the rebellion of the obeying faculties: otherwise if our own wills were perfect, and the rebellion of the inferior faculties cured, no man could then say, "The good that I would, I do not, and the evil

that I would not, that I do.' For the will would so fully command, that all would obey, and itself being perfect, all would be perfect. And therefore in heaven it is and will be so.

I know philosophers conclude, that all acts of the inferior faculties are but acts commanded by the will; it should be so I confess. It is the office of the will to command, and the understanding to direct, and the rest to obey. But in our state of sinful imperfection, the soul is so distempered and corrupted, that the will cannot fully rule those faculties that it should rule; so that it may be said, 'I would forbear sin, but cannot.' For, 1. The understanding is become a dark, imperfect director. 2. The will is become an imperfect receiver of the understanding's directions; yea, an opposer, as being tainted with the neighborhood of a distempered sense. 3. When the will is rectified by grace, it is but in part; and therefore when Paul, or any holy man saith, 'I would do good,' and 'I would not do evil,' they mean it not of a perfect willingness, but of a sincere; to wit, that this is the main bent of their will, and the resolved prevalent act of it is for good. 4. When the will doth command, yet the commanded faculties do refuse to obey, through an unfitness of impotency and corruption. 1. The will hath but an imperfect command of the understanding. (I mean as to the exercise of the act, in which respect it commandeth it, and not as to the specification of the act.) A man may truly and strongly desire to know more, and apprehend things more clearly, and yet cannot. 2. The will hath but an imperfect command of the fancy or thoughts; so that a man may truly say, 'I would think more frequently, more intensely, and more orderly of good, and less of vanity, and yet I cannot.' For objects and passions may force the fancy and cogitations in some degree. 3. The will hath but an imperfect command of the passions; so that a man may truly say, 'I would not be troubled, or afraid, or grieved, or disquieted, or angry, but I cannot choose, and I would mourn more for sin, and be more afraid of sinning, and of God's displeasure, and more zealous for God, and more delighted in him, and joy more in holy things, but I cannot.' For these passions lie so open to the assault of objects, (having the senses for their inlet, and the moveable spirits for their seat or instruments) that even

when the will commands them one way, an object may force them in part against the will's command, as we find sensibly in cases of fear, and sorrow or anger, which we can force a man to whether he will or no. And if there be no contradicting object, yet cannot the will excite these passions to what height it shall command; for their motion depends as much (and more) on the lively manner of representing the object, and the working nature and weight of the object represented, and upon the heat and mobility of the spirits, and temperature of the body, as upon the command of the will.

4. Much less can the will command out all vicious habits, and sensual or corrupt inclinations; and therefore a true Christian may well say in respect of these, that he would be more holy, heavenly, and disposed to good, and less to evil, but he cannot. 5. As for complacency and displacency, liking or disliking, love and hatred, so far as they are passions, I have spoke of them before: but so far as they are the immediate acts of the will (willing and nilling) they are not properly said to be commanded by it, but elicited, or acted by it; (wherein, how far it hath power is a most noble question, but unfit for this place or your capacity.) And thus you see that there are many acts of the soul, beside habits, which the will cannot now perfectly command, and so a Christian cannot be what he would be, nor do the things that he would. And these are the first sort of sins of infirmity.

If you say, 'Sure these can be no sins, because we are not willing of them, and there is no more sin than there is will in it;' I answer, 1. We were in Adam willing of that sin which caused them. 2. We are in some degree inclining in our wills to sin, though God have that prevalent part and determination, which in comparative cases doth denominate them. 3. The understanding and will may be most heinously guilty where they do not consent, in that they do not more strongly dissent, and more potently and rulingly command all the subject faculties; and so a negation of the will's act, or of such a degree of it as is necessary to the regiment of the sensual part, is a deep guilt and great offence; and it may be said, that there is will in this sin. It is morally or reputatively voluntary, though not naturally; because the will doth not its office when it should: as a man is guilty of voluntary murder

of his own child, that stands by and seeth his servant kill him, and doth not do his best to hinder him. I would this were better understood by some divines ; for I think that the commonest guilt of the reason and will in our actual sins, is by omission of the exercise of their authority to hinder it ; and that most sins are more brutish, as to the true efficient cause, than many imagine ; and yet they are human or moral acts too, and the soul nevertheless guilty ; because the commanding faculties performed not their office, and so are the moral or imputative causes, and so the great culpable causes of the fact. But I am drawn nearer to philosophy and points beyond your reach than I intended ; a fault that I must be still resisting in all my writings, being upon every occurring difficulty carried to forget my subject, and the capacity of the meanest to whom I write : but what you understand not, pass over, and go to the next.

2. The second kind of sins of infirmity, are, The smaller sort of sins, which we may forbear if we will ; that is, If we be actually, though not perfectly, yet prevalently willing ; or if our will be determined to forbear them ; or if the chief part of the will actually be for such forbearance. The first sort are called sins of infirmity in an absolute sense. These last, I call sins of infirmity in both an absolute and comparative sense : that is, both as they proceed from our inward corruption, which through the weakness of the soul having but little grace, is not fully restrained, and also as they are compared with gross sins : and so we may call idle words, and rash expressions in our haste, and such like, sins of infirmity, in comparison of murder, perjury, or the like gross sins, which we commonly call crimes or wickedness, when the former we use to call but faults. These infirmities are they which the Papists (and some learned divines of our own, as Rob. Baronius in his excellent treatise "*De peccat. Mortali et Veniali*,") do call venial sins ; some of them in a fair and honest sense, viz. Because they are such sins as a true Christian may live and die in, though not unrepented or unresisted, yet not subdued so far as to forsake or cease from the practice of them, and yet they are pardoned. But other Papists call them venial sins in a wicked sense, as if they needed no pardon, and deserved not eternal punishment. (And why

should they call them venial if they need not pardon ?) A justified man liveth in the daily practice of some vain thoughts, or the frequent commission of some other sins, which by his utmost diligence he might restrain ; but he liveth not in the frequent practice of adultery, drunkenness, falsewitnessing, slandering, hating his brother, &c.

Yet observe, that though the forementioned lesser sins are called infirmities, in regard of the matter of them, yet they may be so committed in regard of the end and manner of them, as may make them crimes or gross sins. As for example, if one should use idle words wilfully, resolvedly, without restraint, reluctance or tenderness of conscience, this were gross sinning ; or the nearer it comes to this, and the more wilfulness, or neglect, or evil ends there is in the smallest forbidden action, the worse it is, and the grosser. And observe (of which more anon) that the true bounds or difference between gross sins, and those lesser faults, which we call infirmities, cannot be given ; (I think by any man, I am sure not by me,) either as to the act itself, to say, just what acts are gross sins, and what not ; or else as to the manner of committing them ; as to say, just how much of the will must go to make a gross sin ; or just how far a man may proceed in the degree of evil intents ; or how far in the frequency of sinning, before it must be called a gross sin.

3. The third sort of sins, which may be called sins of infirmity, are these last mentioned gross sins themselves, so far as they are found in the regenerate : these are gross sins put in opposition to the former sort of infirmities ; but our divines use to call them all sins of infirmity, in opposition to the sins of unbelievers, who are utterly unholy. And they call them sins of infirmity, 1. Because the person that committeth them is not dead in sins, as the unregenerate are, but only diseased, wounded and infirm. 2. Because that they are not committed with so full consent of will, as those of the unregenerate are ; but only after much striving, or at least contrary to habitual resolutions, though not against actual.

Here we are in very great difficulties, and full of controversies : some say that these gross sins do extinguish true grace, and are inconsistent with it : and that David and Peter were out of the state

of grace till they did again repent. Others say, that they were in the state of grace, and not at all so liable to condemnation, but that if they had died in the act, they had been saved, because "there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus;" and that therefore all the sins of believers are alike sins of infirmity, pardoned on the same terms: and therefore as a rash word may be pardoned without a particular repentance, so possibly may these gross sins. To others this seems dangerous and contrary to Scripture, and therefore they would fain find out a way between both; but how to do it clearly and satisfactorily is not easy (at least to me, who have been long upon it, but am yet much in the dark in it.) I think it is plain that such persons are not totally unsanctified by their sin; I believe that Christ's interest is habitually more in their wills than is the interest of the flesh or world, at that very time when they are sinning, and so Christ's interest is least as to their actual willing; and so sin prevaleth for that time against the act of their faith and love, but not wholly against the prevalent part of the habit. And therefore when the shaking wind of that stormy temptation is over, the soul will return to Christ by repentance, love and renewed obedience. But then to know what state he is relatively in, this while, as to his justification, and reconciliation, and right to glory, is the point of exceeding difficulty. Whether as we distinguish of habitual faith, and love, and obedience, which he hath not lost; and actual, which he hath lost; so we must make some answerable distinction of justification (habitual and actual it cannot be) into virtual justification which he hath not lost, and actual justification which he hath lost: or into plenary justification (which he hath not) and imperfect justification, wanting a further act to make it plenary (which may remain.) But still it will be more difficult to shew punctually what this imperfect or virtual justification is: and most difficult to shew, whether with the loss of actual plenary justification, and the loss of a plenary right to heaven, a man's salvation may consist; that is, whether if he should die in that condition, he should be saved or condemned? Or if it be said, that he shall certainly repent, 1. Yet such a supposition may be put, while he yet repenteth not; for the inquiry into his state, how far there is any intercession of his justification, pardon, adoption or right to

salvation? 2. And whether it can fully be proved that it is impossible (or that which never was or shall be) for a regenerate man to die in the very act of a gross sin (as self-murder or the like?) For my part I think God hath purposely left us here in the dark, that we may not be too bold in sinning, but may know that whether the gross sins of believers be such as destroy their justification and the right to glory, prevalently or not, yet certainly they leave them in the dark, as to any certainty of their justification or salvation.

And then more dark is it and impossible to discover, how far a man may go in these grosser sins, and yet have the prevalent habits of grace. As to the former question about the intercession of justification, I am somewhat inclinable to think, that the habit of faith hath more to do in our justification than I have formerly thought, and may as properly be said to be the condition as the act : and that as long as a man is (in a prevalent degree) habitually a believer, he is not only imperfectly and virtually justified, but so far actually justified, that he should be saved, though he were cut off before he actually repent : and that he being already habitually penitent, having a hatred of all sin as sin, should be saved if mere want of opportunity do the act : and that only those sins do prevent bring a man into a state of condemnation, prove him in such, which consist not with the habitual preeminence of Christ's interest in our souls, above the interest of the flesh and world : and that David's and Peter's were such as did consist with the preeminence of Christ's interest in the habit. But withal, that such gross sins must needs be observable, and so the soul that is guilty doth ordinarily know its guilt, yea, and think of it : and that it is inconsistent with this habitual repentance, not to repent actually as soon as time is afforded, and the violence of passion is so far allayed, as that the soul may recollect itself, and reason have its free use : and that he that hath this leisure and opportunity for the free use of reason, and yet doth not repent, it is a sign that the interest of the flesh is habitually as well as actually stronger than Christ's interest in him. I say, in this doubtful case, I am most inclining to judge thus : but as I would have no man take this as my resolved judgment, much less a certain truth, and least of all, to venture on sin and impenitency ever the more for such a doubtful opinion, which doth not

conclude him to be certainly unjustified ; so I am utterly ignorant both how long sensual passions may possibly rage, and keep the soul from sober consideration : or how far they may interpose in the very time of consideration, and frustrate it, and prevail against it, and so keep the sinner from actual repenting, or at least, from a full ingenuous acknowledgement and bewailing of the sin, which is necessary to full repentance ; and how long repentance may be so far stifled, as to remain only in some inward grudgings of conscience, and trouble of mind, hindered from breaking out into free confession (which seemeth to have been David's case long.) Nay, it is impossible to know just how long a man may live in the very practice of such gross sin, before Christ's habitual interest above the flesh be either overthrown, or proved not to be there ; and how oft a man that hath true grace may commit such sins : these things are undiscernible, besides that none can punctually define a gross sin, so as to exclude every degree of infirmities, and include every degree of such gross sin.

Perhaps you will marvel why I run so far in this point : it is both to give you as much light as I can, what sins they be which are to be called infirmities, and so what sins they be that do forbid that gentle, comforting way of cure, when the soul is troubled for them, which must be used with those that are troubled more than needs, or upon mistakes ; and also to convince you of this weighty truth, That our comfort, yea, and assurance, hath a great dependance on our actual obedience : yea, so great, that the least obedient sort of sincere Christians cannot by ordinary means have any assurance : and the most obedient (if other necessities concur) will have the most assurance : and for the middle sort, their assurance will rise or fall, ordinarily with their obedience, so that there is no way to comfort such offending Christians, but by reducing them to fuller obedience by faith and repentance, that so the evidences of their justification may be clear, and the great impediments of their assurance and comfort be removed.

This I will yet make clearer to you by its reasons, and then tell you how to apply it to yourself.

1. No man can be sure of his salvation or justification, but he that is sure of his true faith and love. And no man can be sure

of his true faith and love, but he that is sure of the sincerity of his obedience. For true faith doth ever take God for our great Sovereign, and Christ for our Lord Redeemer, and containeth a covenant-delivery of a man's self to God and the Redeemer, to be ruled by him, as a subject, child, servant and spouse. This is not done sincerely and savingly, unless there be an actual and habitual resolution to obey God and the Redeemer, before all creatures, and against all temptations that would draw us from him. To obey Christ a little and the flesh more, is no true obedience : if the flesh can do more with us to draw us to sin, than faith and obedience do to keep us from sin, ordinarily, this is no true faith or obedience. If Christ have not the sovereignty in the soul, and his interest be not the most predominant and potent, we are no true believers. Now it is plain, that the interest of the world and flesh doth actually prevail, when a man is actually committing a known sin, and omitting a known duty ; and then it is certain that habits are known but by the acts. And therefore it must needs be that the soul that most sinneth, must needs be most in doubt whether the interest of Christ or the flesh be predominant, and so whether his obedience be true or no ; and so whether he did sincerely take Christ for his Sovereign : and that is, whether he be a true believer ; for when a man is inquiring into the state of his soul, whether he do subject himself to Christ as his only Sovereign ; and whether the authority and love of Christ will do more with him than the temptations of the world, flesh and devil : he hath no way to be resolved but by feeling the pulse of his own will. And if he say, ' I am willing to obey Christ before the flesh,' and yet do actually live in an obedience to the flesh before Christ, he is deceived in his own will ; for this is no saving willingness. A wicked man may have some will to obey Christ principally ; but having more will to the contrary, viz. to please the flesh before Christ, therefore he is wicked still ; so that you see in our self-examination, the business is for the most part finally resolved into our sincere actual obedience. For thus we proceed : we first find, He that believeth and loveth Christ sincerely, shall be saved. Then we proceed, He that believeth sincerely taketh Christ for his Sovereign. Then, He that truly taketh Christ for his Sovereign, doth truly resolve to obey him and

his laws, before the world, flesh or devil. Then, He that truly resolveth thus to obey Christ before all, doth sincerely perform his resolution, and doth so obey him. For that is no true resolution ordinarily, that never comes to performance. And here we are cast unavoidably to try whether we do perform our resolutions by actual obedience, before we can sit down with settled peace; much more before we get assurance. Now those that are diligent and careful in obeying, and have greatest conquest over their corruptions, and do most seldom yield to temptations, but do most notably and frequently conquer them, these have the clearest discovery of the performance of their resolutions by obedience, and consequently the fullest assurance: but they that are oftenest overcome by temptations, and yield most to sin, and live most disobediently, must needs be furthest from assurance of the sincerity of their obedience, and consequently of their salvation.

2. God himself hath plainly made our actual obedience, not only a sign of a true faith, but a secondary part of the condition of our salvation, as promised in the new covenant. And therefore it is as impossible to be saved without it, as without faith, supposing that the person have opportunity to obey, in which case only it is made necessary, as a condition. This I will but cite several Scriptures to prove, and leave you to peruse them if you be unsatisfied; Rom. viii. 1—14. They that are in Christ Jesus, are they that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. "If ye live after the flesh ye shall die, but if ye by the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live." "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gate into the city;" Rev. xxii. 14. "He is become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him;" Heb. v. 9. "Take my yoke upon you, for it is easy, and my burden, for it is light. Learn of me to be meek and lowly, &c. and ye shall find rest," &c.; Matt. xi. 28—30. John xvi. 27. Luke xiii. 24. Phil. ii. 12. Rom. ii. 7. 10. John xv. 12. 17. xii. 21. Matt. v. 44. Luke vi. 27. 35. Prov. viii. 17. 21. Matt. x. 37. 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. 2 Tim. ii. 5. 12. Matt. xxv. 41, 42. James ii. 21—24. 26. i. 22. ii. 5. Prov. i. 23. xxviii. 13. Luke xiii. 3. 5. Matt. xii. 37, xi. 25, 26. vi. 12. 14, 15. 1 John i. 9. Acts viii. 22. iii. 19. xxii. 16. Luke vi. 37. 1 Pet.

iv. 18. i. 2. 22. Rom. vi. 16. ; with abundance more the like.

Now when a poor sinner that hath oft fallen into drunkenness, railing, strife, envying, &c. shall read that these are the works of the flesh, and that for these things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience ; and that every man shall be judged according to his works, and according to what he hath done in the flesh ; and that they that do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God ; it cannot be but that his assurance of salvation must needs have so great a dependance on his obedience, as that these sins will diminish it. When he reads Rom. vi. 16., " Hi: servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness," he must needs think, how such a time, and such a time, he obeyed sin ; and the oftener and the more wilfully he did it, the more doubtful will his case be ; especially if he be yet in a sinful course, which he might avoid, whether of gross sin, or of any wilful sin, it cannot be but this will obscure the evidence of his obedience. Men cannot judge beyond evidence ; and he that hath not the evidence of his true obedience, hath not the evidence of the sincerity of his faith.

3. Moreover, assurance and comfort are God's gifts, and without his gracious aid we cannot attain them. But God will not give such gifts to his children, while they stand out in disobedience, but when they carefully please him. Paternal justice requires this.

4. And it would do them abundance of hurt, and God much dishonor, if he should either tell them just how oft, or how far they may sin, and yet be saved ; or yet should keep up their peace and comforts, as well in their greatest disobedience, as in their tenderest careful walking with him. But these things I spoke of before, and formerly elsewhere.

You see then, that though some obedient, tender Christians may yet on several occasions be deprived of assurance ; yet ordinarily no other but they have assurance ; and that assurance and comfort will rise and fall with obedience.

And for all the Antinomian objections against this, as if it were a leading men to their own righteousness from Christ, I refer you to the twenty arguments which I before laid you down, to prove that we may and must fetch our assurance and comfort from our own

works and graces; and so from our own evangelical righteousness, which is subordinate to Christ's righteousness, (which he speaks of, Matt. xxv. last, and in forty places more) though we must have no thoughts of a legal righteousness (according to the law of works or ceremonies) in ourselves. They may as well say, that a woman doth forsake her husband, because she comforteth herself in this, that she hath not forsaken him, or been false and unchaste, thence gathering that he will not give her a bill of divorce. Or that a servant forsakes his master, or a subject his prince, or a parent is forsaken by his child; because they comfort themselves in their obedience and loyalty, gathering thence that they are not flat rebels, and shall not be used as rebels. Or that any that enter covenant with superiors do forsake them, because they comfort themselves in their keeping covenant, as a sign that the covenant shall be kept with them: all these are as wise collections, as to gather, that a man forsakes Christ and his righteousness, and setteth up his own instead of it, because he looks at his not forsaking, refusing and vilifying of Christ, his love and faithful obedience to Christ, as comfortable signs that Christ will not forsake and reject him. Do these men think that a rebel may have the love of his prince, and as much comfort from him as a loyal subject? Or a whorish woman have as much love and comfort from her husband, as a faithful wife? Or a stubborn, rebellious son or servant have as much love and comfort from their father or mother as the dutiful? If there be so near a relation as hitherto we have supposed, between a sovereign and subjection to him, and a husband and marriage-faithfulness to him, and a master and service to him, and a father and loving obedience to him, it is strange that men should suppose such a strange opposition, as these men do. Certainly God doth not so, when he saith, "If I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master where is my fear?" Mal. i. 6. And Isaiah i. 3, 4. "Hear O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord, they have pro-

voked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they are gone away backward." And Jer. iii. 19. "Thou shalt call me, My father, and shalt not depart away from me." And 2 Tim. ii. 19. "The Lord knoweth who are his. And let him that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." And Psalm lxvi. 18. "If I delight in iniquity, or regard it, God will not hear my prayers," saith David himself. Doubtless Paul did not forsake Christ's righteousness by confidence in his own, when he saith, "This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity we have had our conversation among you ; 2 Cor. i. 12. with many the like which I before mentioned. Nor doth the Lord Jesus at the day of Judgment turn men off from his righteousness, when he saith, "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, I will make thee ruler over much ;" Luke xix. 17. Matt. xxv. 23. and calls them thereupon righteous, saying, "And the righteous shall go into life everlasting ;" Matt. xxv. last.

It remains now that I further acquaint you what use you should make of this observation, concerning the dependance of assurance upon actual obedience. And first, I advise you, if your soul remain in doubts and troubles, and you cannot enjoy God in any way of peace and comfort, nor see any clear evidence of the sincerity of your faith, take a serious view of your obedience, and faithfully survey your heart and life, and your daily carriage to God in both. See whether there be nothing that provokes God to an unusual jealousy ; if there be, it is only the increase of some carnal interest in your heart, or else the wilful or negligent falling into some actual sin, of commission or of omission. In the making of this search, you have need to be exceeding cautious ; for if I have any acquaintance with the mystery of this business, your peace or trouble, comfort or discomfort, will mainly depend on this. And your care must lie in this point, that you diligently avoid these two extremes : first, That you do not deal negligently or unfaithfully with your own soul, as either unwilling to know the truth, or unwilling to be at that labor which you must needs be at before you can know it. Secondly, That you do not either condemn yourself when your conscience doth acquit you ; or vex your soul with needless scruples, or make unavoidable or ordinary infirmities to seem

such wilful heinous sin, as should quite break your settled peace. O how narrow is the path between these two mistaken roads, and how hard a thing, and how rare is it to find it and to keep it! For yourself, and all tender-conscienced Christians, that are heartily willing to be ruled by Christ, I would persuade you equally to beware of both these; because some souls are as inclinable to the latter extreme as to the former (during their troubles.) But for the most Christians in the world, I would have them first and principally avoid the former, and that with far greater diligence than the latter. For, 1. Naturally all men's hearts are far more prone to deal too remissly, yea, unfaithfully with themselves, in searching after their sins, than too scrupulously and tenderly. The best men have so much pride and carnal self-love, that it will strongly incline them to excuse, or mince, or hide their sins, and to think far lighter and more favorably of it than they should do, because it is theirs. How was the case altered with Judah towards Thamar, when he once saw it was his own act! How was David's zeal for justice allayed, as soon as he heard, "Thou art the man!" This is the most common cause why God is fain to hold our eyes on our transgressions by force, because we are so loath to do it more voluntarily; and why he openeth our sin in such crimson and scarlet colors to us; because we are so apt either to look on them as nothing, or to shut our eyes and overlook them: and why God doth hold us so long on the rack, because we would still ease ourselves by ingenious excuses and extenuations: and why God doth break the skin so oft, and keep open our wounds; because we are still healing them by such carnal shifts. This proud, sin-excusing distemper needs no other proof or discovery, than our great tenderness and backwardness in submitting to reproofs: how long do we excuse sin, and defend our pretended innocency, as long as we can find a word to say for it. Doth not daily experience of this sad distemper, even in most of the godly, discover fully to us, that most men (yea naturally all) are far more prone to overlook their sins, and deal faithlessly and negligently in the trial; than to be too tender, and to charge themselves too deeply.

Besides, if a Christian be heartily willing to deal impartially, and search to the quick, yet the heart is lamentably deceitful, that

he shall overlook much evil in it, when he hath done his best. And the devil will be far more industrious to provoke and help you to hide, excuse, and extenuate sin, than to open it, and see it as it is. His endeavor to drive poor souls into terrors, is usually but when he can no longer keep them in presumption. When he can hide their sin no longer, nor make it seem small, to keep them in impenitency, then he will make it seem unpardonable and remediless if he can ; but usually not before. So that you see the frame of most men's spirits doth require them, to be rather over-jealous in searching after their sins, than over-careless and confident of themselves.

2. Besides this, I had rather of the two that Christians would suspect and search too much than too little, because there is a hundred times more danger in seeing sin less than it is, or overlooking it, than in seeing it greater than it is, and being over-fearful. The latter mistake may bring us into sorrow, and make our lives uncomfortable to us (and therefore should be avoided ;) but usually it doth not endanger our happiness ; but is often made a great occasion of our good. But the former mistake may hazard our everlasting salvation, and so bring us to remediless trouble.

3. Yea, lest you should say, ' This is sad language to comfort a distressed wounded soul,' let me add this one reason more. So far as I can learn by reading the Scriptures, and by long experience of very many souls under troubles of conscience, It is most commonly some notable cherished corruption, that breedeth and feedeth the sad, uncomfortable state of most professors, except those who by melancholy or very great ignorance, are so weak in their intellectuals, as that they are incapable of making any true discovery of their condition, and of passing a right judgment upon themselves thereupon.

Lest I should make sad any soul that God would not have sad, let me desire you to observe, 1. That I say but of most professors, not all ; for I doubt not but God may hide his face for some time from some of the holiest and wisest of believers, for several and great reasons. 2. Do but well observe most of the humble, obedient Christians, that you know to lie under any long and sad distress of mind, and you will find that they are generally of one of

the two forementioned sorts : either so ignorant as not to know well what faith is, or what the conditions of the covenant are, or what is the extent of the promise, or the full sufficiency of Christ's satisfaction for all sinners, or what are the evidences by which they may try themselves : or else they are melancholy persons, whose fancy is still molested with these perturbing vapours, and their understandings so clouded and distempered, that reason is not free. And so common is this latter, that in my observation of all the Christians that have lived in any long and deep distress of mind, six, if not ten for one, have been deeply melancholy ; except those that feed their troubles by disobedience. So that besides these ignorant and melancholy persons, and disorderly, declining Christians, the number of wounded spirits I think is very small, in comparison of the rest. Indeed it is usual for many at, or shortly after, their first change, to be under trouble and keep fears ; but that is but while the sense of former sin is fresh upon their hearts. The sudden discovery of so deep a guilt, and so great a danger, which a man did never know before, must needs amaze and affright the soul : and if that fear remain long, where right means are either not known, or not used for the cure, it is no wonder ; and sometimes it will be long, if the rightest means be used. But for those that have been long in the profession of holiness, and yet lie, or fall again under troubles of soul (except those before excepted,) I would have them make a diligent search, whether God do not observe either some fleshly interest encroach upon his right, or some actual sin to be cherished in their hearts or conversations.

And here let me tell you, when you are making this search, what particulars they be which I would have you to be most jealous of. i. The former sort, which I call contrary carnal interest, encroaching on Christ's right, are they that you must look after with far more diligence than your actual sins. 1. Because they are the far greatest and most dangerous of all sins, and the root of all the rest : for as God is the end and chief good of every saint, so these sins do stand up against him, as our end and chief good, and carry away the soul by that act which we call simply willing, or complacency, and so these interests are men's idols, and resist God's very sovereignty and perfect goodness ; that is, they are

against God himself as our God. Whereas those which I now call actual sins, as distinct from these, are but the violation of particular precepts, and against God's means and laws directly, and but remotely, or indirectly against his Godhead : and they have but that act of our will, which we call election, consent or use, which is proper to means, and not to the end. (2.) Because, as these sins are the most damnable, so they lie deepest at the heart, and are not so easily discovered. It is ordinary with many, to have a covetous, worldly, ambitious heart, even damnably such, that yet have wit to carry it fairly without ; yea, and seem truly religious to themselves and others. (3.) Because these sins are the most common : for though they reign only in hypocrites and other unsanctified ones, yet they dwell too much in all men on earth.

If you now ask me what these sins are, I answer, They are, as denominated from the point or term from which men turn, all comprised in this one, 'unwillingness of God, or the turning of the heart from God, or not loving God.' But as we denominate them from the term or object to which they run, they are all comprised in this one, 'carnal self-love, or turning to, and preferring our carnal self before God :' and as it inclineth to action, all, or most of it, is comprehended in this one word, 'Fleshpleasing.' But because there are a trinity of sins in this unity, we must consider them distinctly. Three great objects there are, about which this sin of fleshpleasing is exercised : 1. Credit or honor. 2. Profit or riches. 3. Sensual pleasure, more strictly so called, consisting in the more immediate pleasing of the senses ; whereas the two first do more remotely please them, by laying in provision to that end ; otherwise all three are in the general but fleshpleasing. The three great sins therefore that do most directly fight against God himself in his sovereignty, are, 1. Pride or ambition. 2. Worldliness, or love of riches. 3. Sensuality, voluptuousness, or inordinate love of pleasures. There are in the understanding indeed other sins, as directly against God as these, and more radical : as, 1. Atheism, denying a God. 2. Polytheism, denying our God to be the alone God, and joining others with him. 3. Idolatry, owning false Gods. 4. Infidelity, denying Jesus Christ our Lord Redeemer. 5. Owning false Saviors and prophets, in his stead, or before him, as do

the Mahometans. 6. Joining other Redeemers and Saviors with him, as if he were not the alone Christ. 7. Denying the Holy Ghost, and denying credit to his holy and miraculous testimony to the Christian faith, and blasphemously ascribing all to the devil; which is the sin against the Holy Ghost. 8. Owning and believing in devils, or lying spirits instead of the Holy Ghost; as the Montanists, Mahometans, Ranters, Familists do. 9. Owning and adjoining devils, or lying spirits, in co-ordination or equality with the Holy Ghost, and believing equally his doctrine and theirs; as if he were not sole and sufficient in his work. All these are sins directly against God himself, and if prevalent, most certainly damning; three against the Father, three against the Son, and three against the Holy Ghost. But these be not they that I need now to warn you of. These are prevalent only in pagans, infidels, and blasphemers. Your troubles and complaints shew that these are not predominant in you. It is therefore the three forementioned sins of the heart or will, that I would have you carefully to look after in your troubles, to see whether none of them get ground and strength in you.

1. Inquire carefully into your humility. It is not for nothing that Christ hath said so much of the excellency and necessity of this grace; when he bids us learn of him to be meek and lowly; when he blesseth the meek and poor in spirit: when he setteth a little child in the midst of them, and telleth them, except they become as that child, they could not enter into the kingdom of heaven: when he stoopeth to wash and wipe his disciples' feet, requiring them to do so by one another. How oft doth the Holy Ghost press this upon us? Commanding us to submit ourselves to one another, and not to mind high things; but to condescend to men of low estate; Rom. xii. 16. and not to be wise in our own esteem, but in honor prefer others before ourselves; Rom. xii. 10. How oft hath God professed to resist and take down the proud, and to give grace to the humble, and dwell with them? Search carefully, therefore, lest this sin get ground upon you. For though it may not be so predominant and raging as to damn you, yet may it cause God to afflict you, and hide his face from you, and humble you by the sense of his displeasure, and the concealment of his love.

And though one would think that doubting, troubled souls should be always the most humble and freest from pride, yet sad experience hath certified me, that much pride may dwell with great doubtings and distress of mind. Even some of the same souls that cry out of their own unworthiness, and fear lest they shall be firebrands of hell, yet cannot endure a close reproof, especially for any disgraceful sin, nor bear a disparaging word, nor love those, nor speak well of them, who do not value them, nor endure to be crossed or contradicted in word or deed, but must have all go their way, and follow their judgment, and say as they say, and dance after their pipe, and their hearts rise against those that will not do it ; much more against those that speak or do any thing to the diminishing of their reputation : they cannot endure to be low, and passed by, and overlooked, when others are preferred before them, or to be slighted and disrespected, or their words, or parts, or works, or judgments to be contemned or disparaged. Nay, some are scarce able to live in the same house, or church, or town, in love and peace, with any but those that will humor and please them, and speak them fair, and give them smooth and stroking language, and forbear crossing, reproof, and disparaging them. Every one of these singly is an evident mark and fruit of pride ; how much more all jointly. I seriously profess it amazeth me to consider how heinously most professors are guilty of this sin ! even when they know it to be the devil's own sin, and the great abomination hated of God, and read and hear so much against it as they do, and confess it so oft in their prayers to God, and yet not only inwardly cherish it, but in words, actions, gestures, apparel, express it, and passionately defend these discoveries of it. The confusions and distractions in church and state are nothing else but the proper fruits of it ; so are the contentions among Christians, and the unpeaceableness in families ; “ for only from pride cometh contention,” saith Solomon ; Prov. xiii. 10. For my part, when I consider the great measure of pride, self-conceitedness, self-esteem, that is in the greatest part of Christians that ever I was acquainted with, (we of the ministry not excepted,) I wonder that God doth not afflict us more, and bring us down by foul means, that will not be brought down by fair. For my own part, I have

had as great means to help me against this sin, as most men living ever had; first, in many years' trouble of mind, and then in near twenty years' languishing, and bodily pains, having been almost twenty times at the grave's mouth, and living near it continually; and lastly, and above all I have had as full a sight of it in others, even in the generality of the professors, and in the doleful state of the church and state, and heinous, detestable abominations of this age, which one would think should have fully cured it. And yet if I hear but either an applauding word from any of same on one side, or a disparaging word on the other side, I am fain to watch my heart as narrowly as I would do the thatch of my house when fire is put to it, and presently to throw on it the water of detestation, resolution, and recourse to God. And though the act through God's great mercy be thus restrained, yet the constancy of these inclinations assures me, that there is still a strong and deep root. I beseech you therefore, if you would ever have settled peace and comfort, be watchful against this sin of pride, and be sure to keep it down, and get it mortified at the very heart.

2. The next sin that I would have you be specially jealous of, is covetousness, or love of the profits or riches of the world. This is not the sin of the rich only, but also of the poor: and more heinous is it in them, to love the world inordinately, that have so little of it, than in rich men, that have more to tempt them, though dangerous in both. Nor doth it lie only in coveting that which is another's, or in seeking to get by unlawful means; but also in overvaluing and overloving the wealth of the world, though lawfully gotten. He that loveth the world, (that is, above Christ and holiness,) the love of the Father is not in him, (that is, savingly and sincerely;) 1 John ii. 15. He that loveth house or lands better than Christ, cannot be his disciple. I beseech you therefore when God hides his face, search diligently, and search again and again, lest the world should encroach on Christ's interest in your heart. If it should be so, can you wonder if Christ seem to withdraw, when you begin to set so light by him, as to value dung and earth in any comparison with himself? May he not well say to you, 'If you set so much by the world, take it, and see what it will do for you? If you can spare me better than your wealth, you shall be without me.

Must not the Lord Jesus needs take it exceedingly unkind, that after all his love and bloodshed, and pains with your heart, and seals of his kindness, and discoveries of his amiableness, and the treasures of his kingdom, you should now so much forget and slight him, to set up the world in any comparison with him? And to give such loving entertainment to his enemy? And look so kindly on a competitor? Is his glory worth no more than so? And hath he deserved no better at your hands? Again, therefore, do I beseech you to be afraid, lest you should be guilty of this sin. Examine whether the thoughts of the world grow not sweeter to you, and the thoughts of God and glory more unwelcome and displeasing; whether you have not an eagerness after a fuller estate, and too keen an edge upon your desires after riches, or at least after a fuller portion and provision for your children: or after better accommodations and contentments in house, goods, or other worldly things? Do not worldly hopes delight you too much? And much more your worldly possessions? Are you not too busily contriving how to be richer, forgetting God's words, 1 Tim. vi. 8, 9. 17. Doth not the world eat out the life of your duties, that when you should be serious with God, you have left your heart behind you, and drowned your affections in things below? Doth not your soul stick so fast in this mud and clay, that you can scarce stir it Godward in prayer or heavenly meditation? Do not you cut short duties in your family and in secret, if not frequently omit them, that so you may be again at your worldly business? Or do you not customarily hurry them over, because the world will not allow you leisure to be serious, and so you have no time to deal in good earnest with Christ or your soul? Do not your very speeches of Christ and heaven grow few and strange, because the world must first be served? When you see your brother have need, do you not shut up the bowels of your compassions from him? Doth not the love of the world make you hard to your servants, hard to those you buy and sell with? And doth it not encroach much on the Lord's own day? Look after this earthly vice in all these discoveries, search for your enemy in each of these corners. And if you find that this is indeed your case, you need not much wonder if Christ and you be stranger than heretofore. If this earth get between

your heart and the sun of life, no wonder if all your comforts are in an eclipse, seeing your light is but as the moon's, a borrowed light. And you must be the more careful in searching after this sin, both because it is certain that all men have too much of it, and because it is of so dangerous a nature, that should it prevail it would destroy ; for covetousness is idolatry, and among all the heinous sins that the godly have fallen into, look into the Scripture, and tell me how many of them you find charged with covetousness. And also, because it is a blinding, bes fooling sin, not only drawing old men, and those that have no children, and rich men, that have no need to pursue these things, as madly as others, but also hiding itself from their eyes, that most that are guilty of it will not know it : though, alas ! if they were but willing, it were very easy to know it. But the power of the sin doth so set to work their wits to find excuses and fair names and titles for to cloak it, that many delude others by it, and more delude themselves, but none can delude God. The case of some professors of godliness that I have known, is very lamentable on this point, who being generally noted for a dangerous measure of worldliness, by most that know them, could yet never be brought to acknowledge it in themselves. Nay, by the excellency of their outward duties and discourse, and the strength of their wits, (alas ! ill employed,) and by their great ability of speech, to put a fair gloss on the foulest of their actions, they have gone on so smoothly and plausibly in their worldliness, that though most accused them of it behind their backs, yet no man knew how to fasten any thing on them. By which means they were hindered from repentance and recovery.

In this sad case, though it be God's course very often to let hypocrites and other enemies go on and prosper, because they have their portion in this life, and the reckoning is to come ; yet I have oft observed, that for God's own people, or those he means to make his people by their recovery, God useth to cross them in their worldly desires and designs. Perhaps he may let them thrive awhile, and congratulate the prosperity of their flesh, but at last he breaks in suddenly on their wealth, and scatters it abroad, or addeth some cross to it, that embitters all to them, and then asketh them, ' Where is now your idol ? ' And then they begin to see their folly.

If you do dote on any thing below, to the neglecting of God, he will make a rod for you of that very thing you dote upon, and by it will he scourge you home to himself.

3. The third great heart-sin which I would have you jealous of, is sensuality or voluptuousness, or pleasing the senses inordinately. The two former are in this the more mortal sins, in that they carry more of the understanding and will with them, and make reason itself to be serviceable to them in their workings; whereas sensuality is more in the flesh and passion, and hath oftentimes less assistance of reason or consent of the will. Yet is the will tainted with sensual inclinations, and both reason and will are at best guilty of connivance. and not exercising their authority over the sensual part. But in this sensuality is the more dangerous vice, in that it hath so strong and inseparable a seat as our sensual appetite; and in that it acteth so violently and ragingly as it doth; so that it beareth down a weak opposition of reason and will, and carrieth us on blindfold, and transformeth us into brutes. I will not here put the question concerning the gross acting of this sin (of that anon,) but I would have you very jealous of a sensual disposition. When a man cannot deny his appetite what it would have; or at least, covetousness can do more in restraining it than conscience; when a man cannot make a covenant with his eyes, but must gaze on every alluring object; when the flesh draws to forbidden pleasures, in meats, drinks, apparel, recreations, lasciviousness, and all the considerations of reason cannot restrain it; this is a sad case, and God may well give over such to sadness of heart. If we walk so pleasingly to the flesh, God will walk more displeasingly to us.

And as you should be jealous of these great heart trasgressions, so should you be of particular, actual sins. Examine whether the jealous eye of God see not something that much offendeth him, and causeth your heaviness. I will not enlarge so far as to mind you of the particular sins that you should look after, seeing it must be all, and your obedience must be universal. Only one I will give you a hint of. I have observed God sometimes shew himself most displeased and angry to those Christians, who have the least tenderness and compassion towards the infirmities of others. He that hath made the forgiving others a necessary condition of God's for-

giving us, will surely withdraw the sense of our forgiveness, when we withdraw our forgiveness and compassion to men. He that casts the unmerciful servant into hell, who takes his fellow servant by the throat, will threaten us, and frown upon us, if we come but near it. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "He shall have judgment without mercy that sheweth no mercy;" James ii. 13. Study well, Rom. xiv. xv. Gal. vi.; which the proud, censorious, self-esteeming professors of this age have studied so little, and will not understand. When we deal sourly and churlishly with our weak brethren, and instead of winning an offender by love, we will vilify him, and disdain him, and say, 'How can such a man have any grace?' and will think and speak hardly of those that do but cherish any hopes that he may be gracious, or speak of him with tenderness and compassion; No wonder if God force the consciences of such persons to deal as churlishly and sourly with them, and to clamour against them, and say, 'How canst thou have any true grace, who hast such sins as these?' When our Lord himself dealt away so tenderly with sinners, that it gave occasion to the slanderous Pharisees to say, he was "a friend of Publicans and sinners;" (and so he was, even their greatest friend.) And his command to us is, "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves: let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not himself;" Rom. xv. 1—3. And Gal. vi. 1, 2. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken with a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." When people can bear with almost no infirmity in a neighbor, in a servant, or in their nearest friends, but will make the worst of every fault, no wonder if God make such feel their dealings with others, by his dealings with them. Had such that love to their poorest brethren, which thinketh no evil, and speaketh not evil, which "suffereth long and is kind, envieth not, vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, beareth not itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things;" 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 5, 7. had we more of this love, which covereth a

multitude of infirmities, God would cover our infirmities the more, and tell us of them, and trouble us for them the less.

To this sin I may add another, which is scarcely another, but partly the same with this, and partly its immediate effect ; and that is, unpeaceableness and unquietness with those about us ; this commonly occasioneth God to make us as unpeaceable and unquiet in ourselves. When people are so froward, and peevish, and troublesome, that few can live in peace with them, either in family or neighborhood, except those that have little to do with them, or those that can humor them in all things, and have an extraordinary skill in smooth speaking, flattering or man-pleasing, so that neighbors, servants, children, and sometimes their own yoke-fellows, must be gone from them, and may not abide near them, as a man gets out from the way of a wild beast or a mad dog, or avoideth the flames of a raging fire ; is it any wonder if God give these people as little peace in their own spirits, as they give to others ? When people are so hard to be pleased, that nobody about them or near them can tell how to fit their humors ; neighbors cannot please them, servants cannot please them, husband or wife cannot please each other ; every word is spoken amiss, and every thing done amiss to them ; what wonder if God seem hard to be pleased, and as frequently offended with them ? Especially if their unpeaceableness trouble the church, and in their turbulency and self-conceitedness, they break the peace thereof.

Thus I have told you what sins you must look after when you find your peace broken, and your conscience disquieted ; search carefully lest some iniquity lie at the root. Some I know will think that it is an unseasonable discourse to a troubled conscience, to mind them so much of their sins, which they are apt to look at too much already. But to such I answer, either those sins are mortified and forsaken, or not. If they be, then these are not the persons that I speak of, whose trouble is fed by continued sin ; but I shall speak more to them anon. If not, then it seems for all their trouble of conscience, sin is not sufficiently laid to heart yet.

The chiefest thing therefore that I intend in all this discourse, is this following advice to those that upon search do find themselves guilty in any of these cases. ‘ As ever you would have peace of

conscience, set yourselves presently against your sins. And do not either mistakingly cry out of one sore, when it is another that is your malady ; nor yet spend your days in fears and disquietness of mind, and fruitless complainings, and in the mean time continue in wilful sinning. But resist sin more, and torment your minds less ; and break off your sin and your terrors together.'

In these words I tell you what must be done for your cure ; and I warn you of two sore mistakes of many sad Christians hereabout. The cure lieth in breaking off sin, to the utmost of your power. This is the Achan that disquieteth all. It is God's great mercy that he disquieteth you in sinning, and gives you not over to so deep a slumber and peace in sin, as might hinder your repentance and reformation. The dangerous mistakes here are these two.

1. Some do as the lapwing, cry loudest when they are furthest from the nest, and complain of an aching tooth, when the disease is in the head or heart. They cry out, ' O I have such wandering thoughts in prayer, and such a bad memory, and so hard a heart, that I cannot weep for sin, or such doubts and fears, and so little sense of the love of God, that I doubt I have no true grace.' When they should rather say, ' I have so proud a heart, that God is fain by these sad means to humble me. I am so high in mine own eyes, so wise in my own conceit, and so tender of my own esteem and credit, that God is fain to make me base in my own eyes, and to abhor myself. I am so worldly and in love with earth, that it draws away my thoughts from God, dulls my love, and spoils all my duties. I am so sensual, that I venture sooner to displease my God than my flesh ; I have so little compassion on the infirmities of my neighbors and servants and other brethren, and deal so censoriously, churlishly, and unmercifully with them, that God is fain to hide his mercy from me, and speak to me as in anger, and vex me as in sore displeasure. I am so froward, peevish, quarrelsome, unpeaceable, and hard to be pleased, that it is no wonder if I have no peace with God, or in my own conscience ; and if I have so little quietness who love and seek it no more.' Many have more reason, I say, to turn their complaints into this tune.

2. Another most common, unhappy miscarriage of sad Christians lieth here, That they will rather continue complaining and

self-tormenting, than give over sinning, so far as they might give it over if they would. I beseech you in the name of God, to know and consider what it is that God requireth of you. He doth not desire your vexation but reformation. No further doth he desire the trouble of your mind, than as it tendeth to the avoiding of that sin which is the cause of it. God would have you less in your fears and troubles, and more in your obedience. Obey more, and disquiet your minds less. Will you take this counsel presently, and see whether it will not do you more good than all the complaints and doubtings of your whole life have done. Set yourself with all your might against your pride, worldliness, and sensuality, your unpeaceableness and want of love and tenderness to your brethren ; and whatever other sin your conscience is acquainted with. I pray you tell me, if you had gravel in your shoe, in your travel, would it not be more wisdom, to sit down and take off your shoe, and cast it out, than to stand still, or go complaining, and tell every one you meet of your soreness ? If you have a thorn in your foot, will you go on halting and lamenting ? or will you pull it out ? Truly sin is the thorn in your conscience ; and those that would not have such troubled consciences told of their sins for fear of increasing their distress, are unskilful comforters, and will continue the trouble while the thorn is in. As ever you would have peace then, resolve against sin to the utmost of your power. Never excuse it, or cherish it, or favor it more. Confess it freely. Thank those that reprove you for it. Desire those about you to watch over you, and to tell you of it, though it be not evident. And if you do not see so much pride, worldliness, unpeaceableness, or other sins in yourself, as your friends think they see in you, yet let their judgment make you jealous of your heart, seeing self-love doth oft so blind us that we cannot see that evil in ourselves which others see in us ; nay, which all the town may take notice of. And be sure to engage your friends that they shall not smooth over your faults, or mince them, and tell you of them in extenuating language, which may hinder conviction and repentance, much less silence them, for fear of displeasing you ; but that they will deal freely and faithfully with you. And see that you distaste them not, and discountenance not their plain dealing, lest you discourage them, and de-

give your soul of so great a benefit. Think best of those as your nearest friends, who are least friends to your sin, and do most for your recovery from it. If you say, 'Alas, I am not able to mortify my sins. It is not in my power,' I answer, 1. I speak not of a perfect conquest; nor of a freedom from every passion or incontinency. 2. Take heed of pretending disability when it is unwillingness. If you were heartily willing, you would be able to do much, and God would strengthen you. Cannot you resist pride, worldliness, and sensuality, if you be willing? Cannot you forswear most of the actual sins you commit, and perform the duties that you omit, if you be willing? (though not so well as you would perform them.) Yea, let me say thus much, lest I endanger you by sparing you. Many a miserable hypocrite doth live in trouble of mind and complaining, and after all perish for their wilful disobedience. Did not the rich young man go far before he would break off with Christ? And when he did leave him, he went away sorrowful. And what was the cause of his sorrow? Why, the matter was, that he could not be saved without selling all, and giving it to the poor, when he had great possessions. It was not that he could not be rid of his sin, but that he could not have Christ and heaven without forsaking the world. This is the case of unsanctified persons that are enlightened to see the need of Christ, but are not weaned from worldly profits, honors and pleasures; they are perhaps troubled in mind (and I cannot blame them,) but it is not that they cannot leave sinning, but that they cannot have heaven without leaving their delights and contentments on earth. Sin as sin they would willingly leave; for no man can love evil as evil. But their fleshly profits, honors, and pleasures they will not leave, and there is the stop; and this is the cause of their sorrows and fears. For their own judgment cries out against them, "He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. If ye live after the flesh ye shall die. God resisteth the proud." This is the voice of their informed understandings. And conscience seconds it, and saith, "Thou art the man." But the flesh cries louder than both these, 'Wilt thou leave thy pleasures? Wilt thou undo thyself? Wilt thou be made a scorn or laughing-stock to all?' Or rather it strongly draws and provoketh, when it

hath nothing to say. No wonder if this poor sinner be here in a strait, and live in distress of mind. But as long as the flesh holds so fast, that all this conviction and trouble will not cause it to lose its hold, the poor soul is still in the bonds of iniquity. The case of such an hypocrite, or half Christian, is like the case of the poor Papist, that having glutted himself with flesh in the Lent, was in this strait, that either he must vomit it up, and so disclose his fault, and undergo penance ; or else he must be sick of his surfeit, and hazard his life. But he resolveth rather to venture on the danger, than to bear the penance. Or their case is like that of a proud woman, that hath got a strait garment, or pinching shoe, and because she will not be out of the fashion, she will rather choose to bear the pain, though she halt or suffer at every step. Or like the more impudent sort of them, who will endure the cold, and perhaps hazard their lives, by the nakedness of their necks, and breasts, and arms, rather than they will control their shameless pride. What cure now should a wise man wish to such people as these ? Surely, that the shoe might pinch a little harder, till the pain might force them to cast it off. And that they might catch some cold that would pay them for their folly (so it would but spare their lives,) till it should force them to be ashamed of their pride, and cover their nakedness. Even so when disobedient hypocrites do complain that they are afraid they have no grace, and afraid God doth not pardon them, and will not save them, I should tell them, if I knew them, that I am afraid so too ; and that it is not without cause, and desire, that their fears were such as might affright them from their disobedience, and force them to cast away their wilful sinning. I have said the more on this point, because I know if this advice do but help you to mortify your sin, the best and greatest work is done, whether you get assurance and comfort or no ; and withal, that it is the most probable means to this assurance and comfort.

I should next have warned you of the other extreme, *viz.* needless scruples ; but I mean to make that a peculiar Direction by itself, when I have first added a little more of this great means of peace—a sound obedience.

Direct. XXIV. My next advice for the obtaining of a settled

peace of comfort, is this, 'Take heed that you content not yourself with a cheap course of religion, and such a serving of God, as costeth you little or nothing.' But in your abstaining from sin, in your rising out of sin, and in your discharge of duty, incline most to that way which is most self-denying, and displeasing to the flesh, (so you be sure it be a lawful way.) And when you are called out to any work which will stand you in extraordinary labor and cost, you must be so far from shrinking and drawing your neck out of the yoke, that you must look upon it as a special price that is put into your hand, and singular advantage and opportunity for the increase of your comforts.'

This rule is like the rest of the Christian doctrine, which is not thoroughly understood by any way but experience. Libertines and sensual professors that never tried it, did never well understand it. I could find in my heart to be large in explaining and applying it, but that I have been so large beyond my first intentions in the former Directions, that I will cut off the rest as short as I well can.

Let none be so wickedly injurious to me, as to say, I speak or think of any merit, properly so called, in any the costliest work of man. Fasten not that on me, which I both disclaim, and desire the reader to take heed of. But I must tell you these two things.

1. That a cheap religion is far more uncertain evidence of sincerity, than a dear. It will not discover so well to a man's soul, whether he prefer Christ before the world, and whether he take him and his benefits for his portion and treasure.

2. That a cheap religion is not usually accompanied with any notable degree of comforts, although the person be a sincere-hearted Christian.

Every hypocrite can submit to a religion that will cost him little; much more, which will get reputation with men of greatest wisdom and piety; yea, he may stick to it, so it will not undo him in the world. If a man have knowledge, and gifts of utterance, and strength of body, it is no costly matter to speak many good words, or to be earnest in opposing the sins of others, and to preach zealously and frequently, (much more if he have double honor by it, reverent obedience, and maintenance, as ministers of the Gos-

pel have, or ought to have.) It is hard to discern sincerity in such a course of piety and duty. Woe to those persecutors that shall put us to the trial how far we can go in suffering for Christ ; but it should be a matter of rejoicing to us, when we are put upon it. To be patient in tribulation is not enough ; but to rejoice in it is also the duty of a saint. Let those that think this draweth men to rejoice too much in themselves, but hear what the Lord Jesus himself saith, and his Spirit in his apostles : “ Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake ; for their’s is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my name’s sake : rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven ;” Matt. v. 10—12. “ My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations (not inward temptations of the devil and our lust, but trials by persecution ;) knowing that the trying of your faith worketh patience. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation ; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him ;” James i. 2, 3. 12. See Luke vi. 23. 1 Pet. iv. 13. Acts v. 41. 2 Cor. vi. 10. vii. 4. Col. i. 11. Heb. x. 34. 2 Cor. xiii. 9. xii. 15. O how gloriously doth a tried faith shine, to the comfort of the believer, and the admiration of the beholders ! How easily may a Christian try himself at such a time, when God is trying him ! One hour’s experience, when we have found that our faith can endure the furnace, and that we can hazard or let go all for Christ, will more effectually resolve all our doubtings of our sincerity, than many a month’s trial by mere questioning of our own deceitful hearts.

Object. ‘ But, you may say, what if God call me not to suffering or hazards ? Must I cast myself upon it without a call ? Or must I be therefore without comfort ?’

Answer. No ; you shall not need to cast yourself upon suffering, nor yet to be without comfort for want of it. I know no man but may serve God at dearer rates to the flesh than most of us do, without stepping out of the way of his duty. Nay, he must do it, except he will avoid his duty. Never had the church yet such times of prosperity, but that faithful duty would hazard men, and cause

their trouble in the flesh. Can you not, nay, ought you not, to put yourself to greater labor for men's souls? If you should but go day after day among the poor, ignorant people where you live, and instruct them in the knowledge of God, and bear with all their weakness and rudeness, and continue thus with patience, this might cost you some labor, and perhaps contempt from many of the unthankful. And yet you should not do more than your duty, if you have opportunity for it, as most have, or may have, if they will. If you should further hire them to learn catechisms; if you should extend your liberality to the utmost, for relief of the poor, this would cost you somewhat. If you carry on every just cause with resolution, though never so many great friends would draw you to betray it; this may cost you the loss of those friends. If you would but deal plainly with the ungodly, and against all sin, as far as you have opportunity, especially if it be the sins of rulers and gentlemen of name and power in the world, it may cost you somewhat. Nay, though you were ambassadors of Christ, whose office is to deal plainly, and not to please men in evil, upon pain of Christ's displeasure; you may perhaps turn your great friends to be your great enemies. Go to such a lord, or such a knight, or such a gentleman, and tell him freely, that God looketh for another manner of spending his time, than in hunting and hawking, and sporting and feasting, and that this precious time must be dearly reckoned for. Tell him that God looks he should be the most eminent in holiness, and in a heavenly life, and give an example thereof to all that are below him, as God hath made him more eminent in worldly dignity and possessions. Tell him, that where much is given, much is required; and that a low profession, and dull approbation of that which is good, will serve no man, much less such a man. Tell him, that his riches must be expended to feed and clothe the poor, and promote good uses, and not merely for himself and family, or else he will make but a sad account. And that he must freely engage his reputation, estate, and life, and all for Christ and his Gospel, when he calls you to it; yea, and forsake all for him, if Christ put him to it, or else he can be no disciple of Christ: and then what good will his honors and riches do him, when his soul shall be called for? Try this course with great men, yea

with great men that seem religious, and that no further than faithfulness and compassion to men's souls doth bind you, and do it with all the wisdom you can, that is not carnal; and then tell me what it doth cost you. Let those ministers that are near them, plainly and roundly tell both the parliament-men and commanders of the army, of their unquestionable transgressions, and that according to their nature (and woe to them if they do not,) and then let them tell me what it doth cost them. Alas, sirs, how great a number of professors are base, daubing, self-seeking hypocrites, that cull out the safe, the cheap, the easy part of duty, and leave all the rest! And so ordinarily is this done, that we have made us a new Christianity by it; and the religion of Christ's own making, the self-denying course prescribed by our Master, is almost unknown; and he that should practice it would be taken for a madman, or some self-conceited cynic, or some saucy, if not seditious fellow. It is not, therefore, because Christ hath not prescribed us a more self-denying, hazardous, laborious way, that men so commonly take up in the cheapest religion; but it is through our false-heartedness to Christ, and the strength of sensual, carnal interests in us, which make us put false interpretations on the plainest precepts of Christ, which charge any displeasing duty on us, and familistically turn them into allegories, or at least we will not yield to obey him. And truly, I think that our shifting of Christ in this unworthy manner, and even altering that very frame and nature of Christian religion (by turning that into a flesh-pleasing religion, which is more against the flesh than all the religions else in the world) and dealing so reservedly, superficially and unfaithfully in all his work, is a great cause why Christ doth now appear no more openly for men, and pour out no larger a measure of his Spirit in gifts and consolations. When men appeared ordinarily in the most open manner for Christ, in greatest dangers and sufferings, then Christ appeared more openly and eminently for them, (yet is none more for meekness, humility and love, and against unmerciful or dividing zeal, than Christ.)

2. And as you see that a cheap religiousness doth not so discover sincerity; so secondly, it is not accompanied with that special blessing of God. As God hath engaged himself in his word, that

they shall not lose their reward that give but a cup of water in his name, so he hath more fully engaged himself to those that are most deeply engaged for him; even that they that forsake all for him, shall have manifold recompence in this life, and in the world to come eternal life. Let the experience of all the world of Christians be produced, and all will attest the same truth, That it is God's usual course to give men larger comforts in dearer duties, than in cheap: nay, seldom doth he give large comforts in cheap duties, and seldom doth he deny them in dearer; so be it they are not made dear by our own sin and foolish indiscretion, but by his command, and our faithfulness in obeying him. Who knows not that the consolation of martyrs is usually above other men's, who hath read of their sufferings and strange sustentations? Christian, do but try this by thy own experiences, and tell me, when thou hast most resolutely followed Christ in a good cause; when thou hast stood against the faces of the greatest for God; when thou hast cast thy life, thy family and estate upon Christ, and run thyself into the most apparent hazards for his sake; hast thou not come off with more inward peace and comfort, than the cheaper part of thy religion hath afforded thee? When thou hast stood to the truth and Gospel, and hast done good through the greatest opposition, and lost thy greatest and dearest friends, because thou wouldst not forsake Christ and his service, or deal falsely in some cause that he hath trusted thee in; hast thou not come off with the blessing of peace of conscience? Nay, when thou hast denied thy most importunate appetite, and most crossed thy lusts, and most humbled and abased thyself for God, and denied thy credit, and taken shame to thyself in a free confessing of thy faults, or patiently put up with the greatest abuses, or humbled and tamed thy flesh by necessary abstinence, or any way most displeasing it, by crossing its interest, by bountiful giving, laborious duty, dangers or sufferings, for the sake of the Lord Jesus, his truth and people; hath it not been far better with thee in thy peace and comforts than before? I know some will be ready to say, that may be from carnal pride in our own doing or suffering. I answer, it may be so; and therefore let all watch against that. But I am certain that this is God's ordinary dealing with his people, and therefore we may ordinarily ex-

pect it. It is for their encouragement in faithful duty ; and I may truly say, for their reward, when himself calls that a reward which he gives for a cup of water. Lay well to heart that example of Abraham, for which he is so often extolled in the Scripture, viz. His readiness to sacrifice his only son. This was a dear obedience. “ And, saith God, because (mark because) thou hast done this thing, in blessing I will bless thee, &c. David would not offer to God that which cost him nothing ; 2 Sam. xxiv. 24. 1 Chron. xxi. 24. God will have the best of your hearts, the best of your labors, the best of your estates, the best of all, or he will not accept it. Abel’s sacrifice was of the best, and it was accepted : and God saith to Cain, “ If thou doest well, shalt not thou be accepted?”

Seeing this is so, let me advise you, “ Take it not for a calamity, but for a precious advantage, when God calls thee to a hazardous costly service, which is like to cost thee much of thy estate, to cost thee the loss of thy chiefest friends, the loss of thy credit, the indignation of great ones, or the most painful diligence and trouble of body : shift it not off, but take this opportunity thankfully, lest thou never have such another for the clearing of thy sincerity, and the obtaining of more than ordinary consolations from God : thou hast now a prize in thy hand for spiritual riches, if thou hast but a heart to improve it. I know all this is a paradox to the unbelieving world ; but here is the very excellency of the Christian religion, and the glory of faith. It looks for its greatest spoils, and richest prizes from its conquests of fleshly interests : it is not only able to do it, but expecteth its advancement and consolations by this way. It is engaged in a war with the world and flesh ; and in this war it plays not the vapouring fencer, that seems to do much, but never strikes home, as hypocrites and carnal, worldly professors do : but he says it home, and spares not, as one that knows, that the flesh’s ruin must be his rising, and the flesh’s thriving would be his ruin. In these things the true Christian alone is in good sadness, and all the rest of the world but in jest. The Lord pity poor deluded souls ! You may see by this one thing, how rare a thing true Christianity is among the multitude that take themselves for Christians ; and how certain therefore, it is that few shall be saved.

Even this one point of true mortification and self-denial, is a stranger amongst the most of professors. O how sad a testimony of it are the actions of these late times, wherein so much hath been done for self, and safety, and carnal interests, and so little for Christ! yea, and that after the deepest engagements of mercies and vows that ever lay on a people in the world. Insomuch, that through the just judgment of God, they are now given up to doubt, whether it be the duty of rulers to do any thing as rulers for Christ, or no, or whether they should not let Christ alone to do it himself. Well, this which is such a mystery to the unregenerate world, is a thing that every genuine Christian is acquainted with; for "they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts thereof;" and the world is dead to them, and they to the world; Gal. v. 21.

Take this counsel therefore in all the several cases mentioned in the Direction.

1. In your preventing sin, and maintaining your innocency, if you cannot do it without denying your credit, and exposing yourself to disgrace; or without the loss of friends, or a breach in your estate, do it nevertheless: yea, if it would cost you your utter ruin in the world, thank God that put such an opportunity into your hand for extraordinary consolations. For ordinarily the martyrs' comforts exceed other men's, as much as their burden of duty and suffering doth. Cyprian is fain to write for the comfort of some Christians in his times, that at death were troubled that they missed of their hopes of martyrdom. So also if you cannot mortify any lust without much pinching the flesh, do it cheerfully; for the dearer the victory costeth you, the sweeter will be the issue and review.

2. The same counsel I give you also in your rising from sin. It is the sad condition of those that yield to a temptation, and once put their foot within the doors of Satan, that they ensnare themselves so, that they must undergo thrice as great difficulties to draw back, as they needed to have done beforehand for prevention and forbearance. Sin unhappily engageth the sinner to go on; and one sin doth make another seem necessary. O how hard a thing is it for him that hath wronged another by stealing, deceit, overreaching

in bargaining or the like, to confess his fault, and ask him forgiveness, and to the utmost of his ability to make restitution! What abundance of difficulties will be in the way! It will likely cost him the loss of his credit, besides the breach in his estate, and perhaps lay him open to the rage of him that he hath wronged. Rather he will be drawn to cover his sin with a lie, or at least by excuses. And so it is in many other sins. Now in any of these cases, when men indulge the flesh, and cannot find in their hearts to take that loss or shame to themselves, which a thorough repentance doth require, they do but feed the troubles of their soul, and hide their wounds and sores, and not ease them. Usually such persons go on in a galled, unpeaceable condition, and reach not to solid comfort. (I speak only of those to whom such confession or restitution is a duty.) And I cannot wonder at it: for they have great cause to question the truth of that repentance, and consequently the soundness of that heart, which will not bring them to a self-denying duty, nor to God's way of rising from their sin. It seems at present the interest of the flesh is actually predominant, when no reason or conviction will persuade them to contradict it. As ever you would have sound comfort then in such a case as this, spare not the flesh. When you have sinned, you must rise again or perish. If you cannot rise without fasting, without free confessing, without the utter shaming of ourselves, without restitution, never stick at it. This is your hour of trial: O yield not to the conflict. The dearer the victory costeth you, the greater will be your peace. Try it; and if you find it not so, I am mistaken. Yet if you have sinned so that the opening of it may more discredit the Gospel, than your confession will honor it, and yet your conscience is unquiet, and urgeth you to confess, in such a case be first well informed, and proceed warily and upon deliberation; and first open the case to some faithful minister or able Christian in secret, that you may have good advice.

3. The same counsel also would I give you in the performance of your duty. A magistrate is convinced he must punish sinners, and put down alehouses, and be true to every just cause; but then he must steel his face against all men's reproaches, and the sollicitations of all friends. A minister is convinced that he must teach

from house to house, as well as publicly, if he be able ; and that he must deal plainly with sinners according to their conditions ; yea, and require the church to avoid communion with them, if they be obstinate in evil after other sufficient means ; but then he shall lose the love of his people, and be accounted proud, precise, rigid, lordly, and perhaps lose his maintenance. Obey God now ; and the dearer it costeth you, the more peace and protection, and the larger blessing may you expect from God : for you do, as it were, oblige God the more to stick to you ; as you will take yourself obliged to own, and bear out, and reward those that hazard estate, and credit, and life for you. And if you cannot obey God in such a trial, it is a sad sign of a falsehearted hypocrite, except your fall be only in a temptation, from which you rise with renewed repentance and resolutions, which will conquer for the time to come. As Peter, who being left to himself for an example of human frailty, and that Christ might have no friend to stick by him when he suffered for our sin, yet presently wept bitterly, and afterwards spent his strength and time in preaching Christ, and laid down his life in martyrdom for him.

So perhaps many a poor servant, or hard laborer, hath scarce any time, except the Lord's day, to pray or read. Let such pinch the flesh a little the more (so they do not overthrow their health) and either work the harder, or fare the harder, or be clothed the more meanly, or especially break a little of their sleep, that they may find some time for these duties ; and try whether the peace and comfort will not recompense it. Never any man was a loser for God. So private Christians cannot conscionably discharge the great plain duty of reproof and exhortation, joyingly, yet plainly telling their friends and neighbors of their sins, and danger, and duty, but they will turn friends into foes, and possibly set all the town on their heads. But is it a duty, or is it not ? If it be, then trust God with the issue, and do your work, and see whether he will suffer you to be losers.

For my part I think, that if Christians took God's word before them, and spared the flesh less, and trusted themselves and all to Christ alone, and did not baulk all the troublesome and costly part of religion, and that which most crosseth the interest of the flesh, it

would be more ordinary with them to be filled with the joys of the Holy Ghost, and walk in that peace of conscience which is a continual feast ; and to have such full and frequent views both of the sincerity of their evidencing graces, and of God's reconciled face, as would banish their doubts and fears, and be a greater help to their certainty of salvation, than much other labor doth prove. If you flinch not the fiery furnace, you shall have the company of the Son of God in it. If you flinch not the prison and stocks, you may be able to sing as Paul and Silas did. If you refuse not to be stoned with Stephen, you may perhaps see heaven opened as he did. If you think these comforts so dear bought, that you will rather venture without them ; let me tell you, you may take your course, but the end will convince you to the very heart, of the folly of your choice. Never then complain for want of comfort ; remember you might have had it, and would not. And let me give you this with you ; You will shortly find, though worldly pleasures, riches and honors, were some slight salves to your molested conscience here, yet there will no cure nor ease for it be found hereafter. Your merry hours will then all be gone, and your worldly delights forsake you in distress ; but these solid comforts which you judged too dear, would have ended in the everlasting joys of glory. When men do flinch God and his truth in straits, and juggle with their consciences, and will take out all the honorable, easy, cheap part of the work of Christ, and make a religion of that by itself, leaving out all the disgraceful, difficult, chargeable, self-denying part ; and hereupon call themselves Christians, and make a great show in the world with this kind of religiousness, and take themselves injured if men question their honesty and uprightness in the faith ; these men are notorious self-deceivers, mere hypocrites ; and in plain truth, this is the very true description by which damnable hypocrites are known from sound Christians. The Lord open men's eyes to see it in time while it may be cured ! Yea, and the nearer any true Christian doth come to this sin, the more doth he disoblige God, and quench the spirit of comfort, and darken his own evidences, and destroy his peace of conscience, and create unavoidable troubles to his spirit and estrangedness betwixt the Lord

Jesus and his own soul. Avoid this, therefore, if ever you will have peace.

Direct. XXV. My next advice shall be somewhat near of kin to the former. If you would learn the most expeditious way to peace and settled comfort, 'Study well the art of doing good ; and let it be your every day's contrivance, care and business, how you may lay out all that God hath trusted you with, to the greatest pleasing of God, and to your most comfortable account.'

Still remember (lest any Antinomian should tell you that this savors of Popery, and trusting for peace to our own works ;)

" 1. That you must not think of giving any of Christ's honor or office to your best works. You must not dream that they can do any thing to the satisfaction of God's justice for your sins ; nor that they have any proper merit in them, so as for their worth to oblige God to reward you ; nor that you must have any righteousness or worthiness in yourself and works, which the law of works will so denominate or own. But only you must give obedience its due under Christ ; and so you honor Christ himself, when those that detract from obedience to him, do dishonor him ; and you must have an evangelical worthiness and righteousness (so called, many and many times over in the Gospel) which partly consisteth in the sincerity of your obedience and good works ; as the condition of continuing your state of justification, and right to eternal life.

2. Remember I have given you many arguments before, to prove that you may take comfort from your good works and gracious actions.

3. If any further objections should be made against this, read considerately and believingly, Matt. xxv. v. and vii. throughout, or the former only ; and I doubt not but you will be fully resolved. But to the work.

Those men that study no other obedience than only to do no (positive) harm, are so far from true comfort, that they have yet no true Christianity ; I mean such as will be saving to them. Doing good is a high part of a Christian's obedience, and must be the chief part of his life. The heathen could tell him that asked him, how men might be like to God ; that one way was, To do good to all. That is beyond our power, being proper to God the universal

good, whose mercy is over all his works. But our goodness must be communicative, if we will be like God, and it must be extended and diffused as far as we can. The apostles' charge is plain, and we must obey it if we will have any peace ; " While you have time, do good to all men, especially to them of the household of faith ;" Gal. vi. 10. " Cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool ;" Isa. i. 16, 17. " To do good, and to communicate, forget not ; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased ;" Heb. xiii. 16. " Charge them that be rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy : that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life ; 1 Tim. vi. 17—19. See Luke vi. 33—35. Mark xiv. 7. Matt. v. 44. 1 Pet. iii. 11. James iv. 17. Psalm xxxiv. 14. xxxvii. 27. xxxvi. 3. xxxvii. 3. " Trust in the Lord, and do good." " If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted ? But if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door ;" Gen. iv. 7. " Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. In every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him ;" Acts x. 3, 4. 34, 35. " Know you not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness ? Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God ;" Rom. vi. 13. 16. Matt. v. 16. Acts ix. 36. Eph. ii. 10. " We are created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God hath ordained that we should walk in them." 1 Tim. ii. 10. v. 10. 25. 2 Tim. iii. 17. Tit. ii. 7. iii. 8. 14. ii. 14. " He redeemed us from all iniquity, that he might purify to himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." 1 Pet. ii. 12. Heb. x. 24. " Let us consider one another, to

provoke unto love, and to good works." What a multitude of such passages may you find in Scripture.

You see then how great a part of your calling and religion consisteth in doing good. Now it is not enough to make this your care now and then, or do good when it falls in your way ; but you must study which are good works, and which are they that you are called to ; and which are the best works, and to be preferred, that you choose not a less instead of a greater. God looks to be served with the best. You must study for opportunities of doing good, and of the means of succeeding and accomplishing it ; and for the removing of impediments ; and for the overcoming of dissuasives, and withdrawing temptations. You must know what talents God hath entrusted you with, and those you must study to do good with ; whether it be time, or interest in men, or opportunity, or riches, or credit, or authority, or gifts of mind, or of body : if you have not one, you have another, and some have all.

This therefore is the thing that I would persuade you to : take yourself for God's steward ; remember the time when it will be said to you, " Give account of thy stewardship ; thou shalt be no longer steward." Let it be your every day's contrivance, how to lay out your gifts, time, strength, riches or interest, to your Master's use. Think which way you may do most, first to promote the Gospel and the public good of the church ; and then, which way you may help towards the saving of particular men's souls ; and then, which way you may better the commonwealth, and how you may do good to men's bodies, beginning with your own and those of your family, but extending your help as much further as you are able. Ask yourself every morning, ' Which way may I this day most further my Master's business, and the good of men ? ' Ask yourself every night, ' What good have I done to-day ? ' And labor as much as may be, to be instruments of some great and standing good, and of some public and universal good, that you may look behind you at the year's end, and at your lives' end, and see the good that you have done. A piece of bread is soon eaten, and a penny or a shilling is soon spent ; but if you could win a soul to God from sin, that would be a visible, everlasting good. If you could be instruments of setting up a godly minister in a congrega-

tion that want, the everlasting good of many souls might, in part, be ascribed to you. If you could help to heal and unite a divided church, you might more rejoice to look back on the fruits of your labor, than any physician might rejoice to see his poor patient recovered to health. I have told rich men in another book, what opportunities they have to do good, if they had hearts. How easy were it with them to refresh men's bodies, and to do very much for the saving souls ; to relieve the poor ; to set their children to trades ; to ease the oppressed. How easy to maintain two or three poor scholars at the Universities, for the service of the church. But I hear but a few that do ever the more in it, except three or four of my friends in these parts. Let me further tell you, God doth not leave it to them as an indifferent thing ; Matt. xxv. They must feed Christ in the poor, or else starve in hell themselves : they must clothe naked Christ in the poor, or be laid naked in his fiery indignation for ever. How much more diligently then must they help men's souls, and the church of Christ, as the need is greater, and the work better ! Oh the blinding power of riches !

Oh the easiness of man's heart to be deluded ! Do rich men never think to lie rotting in the dust ? Do they never think that they must be accountable for all their riches, and for all their time, and power, and interests ? Do they not know that it will comfort them at death and judgment, to hear in their reckoning, Item, so much given to such and such poor ; so much to promote the Gospel ; so much to maintain poor scholars, while they study to prepare themselves for the ministry ? &c. Than to hear, So much in such a feast ; to entertain such gallants ; to please such noble friends ; so much at dice, at cards, at horse-races, at cock-fights ; so much in excess of apparel ; and the rest to leave my posterity in the like pomp ? Do they not know that it will comfort them more to hear then of their time spent in reading Scripture, secret and open prayer, instructing and examining their children and servants ; going to their poor neighbors' houses to see what they want, and to persuade them to godliness ; and in being examples of eminent holiness to all ; and in suppressing vice, and doing justice, than to hear of so much time spent in vain recreations, visits, luxuries, and idleness ? O deep unbelief and hardness of heart, that makes gentlemen that

they tremble not to think of this reckoning ! Well, let me tell both them and all men, that if they knew but either their indispensable duty of doing good, that lieth on them, or how necessary and sure a way (in subordination to Christ) this act of doing good is for the soul's peace and consolation, they would study it better, and practise it more faithfully than now they do : they would then be glad of an opportunity to do good, for their own gain, as well as for God's honor, and for the love of good itself. They would know, that lending to the Lord is the only thriving usury ; and that no part of all their time, riches, interest in men, power, or honors, will be then comfortable to them, but that which was laid out for God : and they will one day find, that God will not take up with the scraps of their time and riches, which their flesh can spare ; but he will be first served, even before all comers, and that with the best, or he will take them for no servants of his. This is true, and you will find it so, whether you will now believe it or no.

And because it is possible these lines may fall into the hands of some of the rulers of this commonwealth, let me here mind them of two weighty things :

1. What opportunities of doing very great good hath been long in their hands, and how great an account of it they have to make. It hath been long in their power to have done much to the reconciling of our differences, and healing our divisions, by setting divines a work of different judgments, to find out a temperament for accommodation. It hath long been in their power to have done much towards the supply of all the dark congregations in England and Wales, with competently able, sound and faithful teachers. We have many congregations that do contain three thousand, five thousand, or ten thousand souls, that have but one or two ministers that cannot possibly do the tenth part of the ministerial work of private oversight, and so poor souls must be neglected, let ministers be never so able or painful. We have divers godly, private Christians, of so much understanding, as to be capable of helping us, as officers in our churches ; but they are all so poor, that they are not able to spare one hour in a day or two from their labor, much less to give up themselves to the work. How many a congrega-

tion is in the same case ? Nothing almost is wanting to us, to have set our congregations in the order of Christ, and done this great work of reformation which there is so much talking of, so much as want of maintenance for a competent number of ministers or elders to attend the work. I am sure, in great congregations this is the case, and a sore that no other means will remedy. Was it never in the power of our rulers to have helped us here ? Was nothing sold for other uses, that was once devoted and dedicated to God, and might have helped us in this our miserable distress ? Were our churches able to maintain their own officers, our case were more tolerable ; but when a congregation that wants six, or seven, or ten, is not able to maintain one, it is hard.

2. The second thing that I would mind our rulers of, is, what mortal enemies those men are to their souls, that would persuade them that they must not, as rulers, do good to the souls of men, and to the church as such ; nor further the reformation, nor propagate the Gospel, nor establish Christ's order in the churches of their country, any otherwise than by a common maintaining the peace and liberties of all. What doctrine could more desperately undo you, if entertained ? If you be once persuaded that it belongs not to you to do good, and the greatest good, to which all your successes have made way, then all the comfort, the blessing and reward is lost ; and consequently all the glorious preparative successes, as to you, are lost. If once you take yourselves to have nothing to do as rulers for Christ, you cannot promise yourselves that Christ will have any thing to do for you, as rulers, in a way of mercy. This, Mr. Owen hath lately told you in his sermon, October 13, " The God of heaven forbid, that ever all the devils in hell, the Jesuits at Rome, or the seduced souls in England, should be able to persuade the rulers of this land, who are so deeply bound to God by vows, mercies, professions, and high expenses of treasure and blood, to reform his church, and propagate his Gospel ; that now after all this, it belongeth not to them, but they must, as rulers, be no more for Christ than for Mahomet. But if ever it should prove the sad case of England to have such rulers, (which I strongly hope will never be,) if my prognostics fail not, this will be their fate : the Lord Jesus will forsake them, as they have for-

saken him, and the prayers of his saints will be fully turned against them ; and his elect shall cry to him night and day, till he avenge them speedily, by making these his enemies to lick the dust, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel, because they would not that he should reign over them : and then they shall know whether Christ be not King of kings, and Lord of lords."

Perhaps you may think I digress from the matter in hand ; but as long as I speak but for my Lord Christ, and for doing good, I cannot think that I am quite out of my way. But to return nearer to those for whose sakes I chiefly write, this is that sum of my advice ; Study with all the understanding you have, how to do as much good, while you have time, as possibly you can, and you shall find that (without any Popish or Pharisaical self-confidence) to be the most excellent art for obtaining spiritual peace, and a large measure of comfort from Christ.

To that end use seriously and daily to bethink yourself, what way of expending your time and wealth, and all your talents, will be most comfortable for you to hear of, and review at judgment. And take that as the way most comfortable now. Only consult not with flesh and blood ; make not your flesh of the council in this work, but take it for your enemy ; expect its violent, unwearied opposition ; but regard not any of its clamors or repinings. But know, as I said before, that your most true, spiritual comforts are a prize that must be won, upon the conquest of the flesh. I will only add to this, the words of the blessed Dr. Sibbs (a man that was no enemy to free-grace, nor unjust patron of man's works,) in his preface to his "Soul's Conflict:" "Christ is first a King of righteousness, and then of peace. The righteousness that works by his Spirit brings a peace of sanctification ; whereby though we are not freed from sin, yet we are enabled to combat with it, and to get the victory over it. Some degree of comfort follows every good action, as heat accompanies fire, and as beams and influences issue from the sun. Which is so true, that very heathens upon the discharge of a good conscience, have found comfort and peace answerable ; this is a reward before our reward." Again, "In watchfulness and diligence we sooner meet with comfort, than in idle complaining." Again, pp. 44, 45. "An unemployed life is a

burden to itself. God is a pure Act ; always working ; always doing. And the nearer our soul comes to God, the more it is in action, and the freer from disquiet. Men experimentally feel that comfort in doing that which belongs unto them, which before they longed for and went without." And in his preface to the "Bruised Reed :" "There is no more comfort to be expected from Christ than there is care to please him. Otherwise, to make him an abettor of a lawless and loose life, is to transform him into a fancy ; nay, into the likeness of him, whose works he came to destroy ; which is the most detestable idolatry of all. One way whereby the Spirit of Christ prevaieth in his, is to preserve them from such thoughts : yet we see people will frame a divinity to themselves, pleasing to the flesh, suitable to their own ends ; which being vain in the substance, will prove likewise vain in the fruit, and a building upon the sands." So far Dr. Sibbs. It seems there were libertines and Antinomians then, and will be as long as there are any carnal, unsanctified professors.

Direct. XXVI. Having led you thus far towards a settled peace, my next Direction shall contain a necessary caution, lest you run as far into the contrary extreme, viz. 'Take heed that you neither trouble your own soul with needless scruples, about matters of doctrine, of duty, or of sin, or about your own condition. Nor yet that you do not make yourself more work than God hath made you, by feigning things unlawful, which God hath not forbidden ; or by placing your religion in will-worship, or in an over curious insisting on circumstantial, or an over rigorous dealing with your body.'

This is but the exposition of Solomon, "Be not over wise, and be not righteous overmuch ;" Eccles. vii. 16. A man cannot serve God too much, formally and strictly considering his service ; much less love him too much. But we may do too much materially, intending thereby to serve God, which though it be not true righteousness, yet being intended for righteousness, and done as a service of God, or obedience to him, is here called overmuch righteousness. I know it is stark madness in the profane, secure world, to think that the doing of no more than God hath commanded us, is doing too much, or more than needs ; as if God had bid

us do more than needs, or had made such laws as few of the foolish rulers on earth would make. This is plainly to blaspheme the Most High, by denying his wisdom and his goodness, and his just government of the world ; and to blaspheme his holy laws, as if they were too strict, precise, and made us more to do than needs ; and to reproach his sweet and holy ways, as if they were grievous, intolerable, and unnecessary. Much more is their madness, in charging the godly with being too pure, and too precise, and making too great a stir for heaven, and that merely for their godliness and obedience ; when, alas, the best do fall so far short of what God's word, and the necessity of their own souls do require, that their consciences do more grievously accuse them of negligence, than the barking world doth of being too precise and diligent. And yet more mad are the world, to lay out so much time, and care, and labor, for earthly vanities, and to provide for their contemptible bodies for a little while ; and in the mean time to think, that heaven and their everlasting happiness there, and the escaping of everlasting damnation in hell, are matters not worth so much ado, but may be had with a few cold wishes, and that it is but folly to do so much for it as the godly do. That no labor should be thought too much for the world, the flesh, and the devil, and every little is enough for God. And that these wretched souls are so blinded by their own lusts, and so bewitched by the devil into an utter ignorance of their own hearts, that they verily think, and will stand in it, that for all this they love God above all, and love heavenly things better than earthly, and therefore shall be saved.

But yet extremes there are in the service of God, which all wise Christians must labor to avoid. It is a very great question among divines, Whether the common rule in ethics, that virtue is ever in the middle between two extremes, be sound, as to Christian virtues. Amesius saith no. The case is not very hard, I think, to be resolved, if you will but use these three distinctions : 1. Between the acts of the mere rational faculties, understanding and will, called elicit acts, and the acts of the inferior faculties of soul and body, called imperate acts. 2. Between the acts that are about the end immediately, and those that are about the means. 3. Between the intention of an act, and the objective extention,

and comparison of object with object. And so I say, *Prop. 1.* The end (that is, God and salvation) cannot be too fully known, or too much loved, with a pure, rational love of complacency, nor too much sought by the acts of the soul, as purely rational : for the end being loved and sought for itself, and being of infinite goodness, must be loved and sought without measure or limitation, it being impossible here to exceed. *Prop. 2.* The means, while they are not misapprehended, but taken as means, and materially well understood, cannot be too clearly discerned, nor too rightly chosen, nor too resolutely prosecuted. *Prop. 3.* It is too possible to misapprehend the means, and to place them instead of the end, and so to overlove them. *Prop. 4.* The nature of all the means consisteth in a middle or mean between two extremes, materially ; both which extremes are sin : so that it is possible to overdo about all the means, as to the matter of them, and the extent of our acts. Though we cannot love God too much, yet it is possible to preach, hear, pray, read, meditate, confer of good too much : for one duty may shut out another, and a greater may be neglected by our overdoing in a lesser ; which was the Pharisees' sin in sabbath resting. *Prop. 5.* If we be never so right in the extention of our acts, yet we may go too far in the intention of the imperate acts or passions of the soul, and that both on the means and end ; though the pure acts of knowing or willing cannot be too great towards God and salvation, yet the passions and acts commonly called sensitive, may. A man may think on God not only too much, (as to exclude other necessary thoughts,) but too intensely, and love and desire too passionately : for there is a degree of thinking or meditating, and of passionate love and desire, which the brain cannot bear, but it will cause madness, and quite overthrow the use of reason, by overstretching the organs, or by the extreme turbulency of the agitated spirits. Yet I never knew the man, nor ever shall do, I think, that was ever guilty of one of these excesses ; that is, of loving or desiring God so passionately, as to distract him. But I have often known weak-headed people, (that be not able to order their thoughts,) and many melancholy people, guilty of the other ; that is, of thinking too much, and too seriously and intensely on good and holy things, whereby they have overthrown their reason, and

been distracted. And here I would give all such weak-headed, melancholy persons this warning, that whereas in my Book of Rest, I so much press a constant course of heavenly meditation, I do intend it only for sound heads, and not for the melancholy, that have weak heads, and are unable to bear it. That may be their sin, which to others is a very great duty; while they think to do that which they cannot do, they will but disable themselves for that which they can do. I would therefore advise those melancholy persons whose minds are so troubled, and heads weakened, that they are in danger of overthrowing their understandings, (which usually begins in multitudes of scruples, and restlessness of mind, and continual fears, and blasphemous temptations, where it begins with these, distraction is at hand, if not prevented,) that they forbear meditation, as being no duty to them, though it be to others; and instead of it be the more in those duties which they are fit for, especially conference with judicious Christians, and cheerful and thankful acknowledgment of God's mercies. And thus have I shewed you how far we may possibly exceed in God's service. Let me now a little apply it.

It hath ever been the devil's policy to begin in persuading men to worldliness, fleshpleasing, security, and presumption, and utter neglect of God and their souls, or at least preferring their bodies and worldly things, and by this means he destroyeth the world. But where this will not take, but God awaketh men effectually, and casteth out the sleepy devil, usually he fills men's heads with needless scruples, and next setteth them on a religion not commanded, and would make poor souls believe they do nothing, if they do not more than God hath commanded them. When the devil hath no other way left to destroy religion and godliness, he will pretend to be religious and godly himself, and then he is always over-religious and over-godly in his materials. All overdoing in God's work is undoing; and whoever you meet with that would overdo, suspect him to be either a subtle, destroying enemy, or one deluded by the destroyer. O what a tragedy could I here shew you of the devil's acting! And what a mystery in the hellish art of deceiving could I open to you! And shall I keep the

devil's counsel? No: O that God would open the eyes of his poor desolate churches at last to see it!

The Lord Jesus in wisdom and tender mercy, established a law of grace, and rule of life, pure and perfect, but simple and plain; laying the condition of man's salvation more in the honesty of the believing heart, than in the strength of wit, and subtlety of a knowing head. He comprised the truths which were of necessity to salvation in a narrow room: so that the Christian faith was a matter of great plainness and simplicity. As long as Christians were such and held to this, the Gospel rode in triumph through the world, and an omnipotency of the Spirit accompanied it, bearing down all before it. Princes and sceptres stooped; subtle philosophy was non-plust; and all useful sciences came down, and acknowledged themselves servants, and took their places, and were well contented to attend the pleasure of Christ. As Mr. Herbert saith in his "Church Militant;"—

Religion thence fled into Greece, where arts
Gave her the highest place in all men's hearts;
Learning was proposed; philosophy was set;
Sophisters taken in a fisher's net.
Plato and Aristotle were at a loss,
And wheeled about again to spell Christ's cross.
Prayers chas'd syllogisms into their den,
And 'ergo' was transformed into Amen.

The serpent envying this happiness of the church, hath no way to undo us, but by drawing us from our Christian simplicity. By the occasion of heretics' quarrels and errors, the serpent steps in, and will needs be a spirit of zeal in the church; and he will so overdo against heretics, that he persuades them they must enlarge their creed, and add this clause against one, and that against another, and all was but for the perfecting and preserving of the Christian faith. And so he brings it to be a matter of so much wit to be a Christian, (as Erasmus complains,) that ordinary heads were not able to reach it. He had got them with a religious, zealous cruelty to their own and others' souls, to lay all their salvation, and the peace of the church, upon some unsearchable mysteries

about the Trinity, which God either never revealed, or never clearly revealed, or never laid so great a stress upon : yet he persuades them that there was Scripture-proof enough for these ; only the Scripture spoke it but in the premises, or in darker terms, and they must but gather into their creed the consequences, and put it into plainer expressions, which heretics might not so easily corrupt, pervert, or evade. Was not this reverent zeal? And was not the devil seemingly now a Christian of the most judicious and forward sort? But what got he at this one game? 1. He necessitated implicit faith even in fundamentals, when he had got points beyond a vulgar reach among fundamentals. 2. He necessitated some living judge for the determining of fundamentals ‘quoad nos,’ though not ‘in se’ (the soul of Popish wickedness,) that is, what it is in sense that the people must take for fundamentals. 3. He got a standing verdict against the perfection and sufficiency of Scripture, (and consequently against Christ, his Spirit, his apostles, and the Christian faith;) and that it will not afford us so much as a creed or system of fundamentals, or points absolutely necessary to salvation and brotherly communion, in fit or tolerable phrases; but we must mend the language at last. 4. He opened a gap for human additions, at which he might afterwards bring in more at his pleasure. 5. He framed an engine for infallible division, and to tear in pieces the church, casting out all as heretics that could not subscribe to his additions, and necessitating separation by all dissenters, to the world’s end, till the devil’s engine be overthrown. 6. And hereby he lays a ground upon the divisions of Christians, to bring men into doubt of all religion, as not knowing which is the right. 7. And he lays the ground of certain heart-burnings, and mutual hatred, contentions, revilings, and enmity. Is not here enough got at one cast? Doth there need any more to the establishing of the Romish and hellish darkness? Did not this one act found the seat of Rome? Did not the devil get more in his gown in a day than he could get by his sword in three hundred years? And yet the Holy Ghost gave them full warning of this beforehand; “For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy; for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled

Eve, through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ ;” 2 Cor. xi. 2, 3. “ Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations ;” Rom. xiv. 1. “ The law of the Lord is perfect ;” Psal. xix. “ All Scripture is given by inspiration from God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works ;” 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17. “ To the law and to the testimony : if they speak not according to these, it is because there is no truth in them ;” Isa. viii. 20. With many the like.

This plot the serpent hath found so successful, that he hath followed it on to this day. He hath made it the great engine to get Rome on his side, and to make them the great dividers of Christ’s church. He made the pope and the council of Trent believe, that when they had owned the ancient creed of the church, they must put in as many and more additional articles of their own, and anathematize all gainsayers ; and these additions must be the peculiar mark of their church as Romish ; and then all that are not of that church, that is, that own not these superadded points, are not of the true church of Christ, if they must be judges. Yea, among ourselves hath the devil used successfully this plot ! What confession of the purest church hath not some more than is in Scripture ? The most modest must mend the phrase and speak plainer, and somewhat of their own in it, not excepting our own most reformed confession.

Yea, and where modesty restrains men from putting all such inventions and explications in their creed, the devil persuades men, that they being the judgments of godly, reverend divines (no doubt to be revered, valued, and heard,) it is almost as much as if it were in the creed, and therefore whoever dissenteth must be noted with a black coal, and you must disgrace him, and avoid communion with him as an heretic. Hence lately is your union, communion, and the church’s peace, laid upon certain unsearchable mysteries about predestination, the order and objects of God’s decrees, the manner of the Spirit’s most secret operations on the soul, the nature of the will’s essential liberty, and its power of self-determining, the Divine concurrence, determination or predestination of

man's and all other creatures' actions, &c. That he is scarcely to be accounted a fit member for our fraternal communion that differs from us herein. Had it not been for this one plot, the Christian faith had been kept pure; religion had been one; the church had been one; and the hearts of Christians had been more one than they are. Had not the devil turned orthodox, he had not made so many true Christians heretics, as Epiphanius and Austin have enrolled in the black list. Had not the enemy of truth and peace got into the chair, and made so pathetic an oration as to inflame the minds of the lovers of truth to be over zealous for it, and to do too much, we might have had truth and peace to this day. Yea, still, if he see any man of experience and moderation stand up to reduce men to the ancient simplicity, he presently seems the most zealous for Christ, and tells the inexperienced leaders of the flock, that it is in favor of some heresy that such a man speaks; he is plotting a carnal syncretism, and attempting the reconciliation of Christ and Belial; he is tainted with Popery, or Socinianism, or Arminianism, or Calvinism, or whatsoever may make him odious with those he speaks to. O what the devil hath got by over-doing!

And as this is true in doctrines, so is it in worship and discipline, and pastoral authority, and government. When the serpent could not get the world to despise the poor fishermen that published the Gospel (the devil being judged, and the world convinced by the power of the Holy Ghost, the Agent, Advocate, and Vicar of Christ, on earth,) he will then be the most forward to honor and promote them. And if he cannot make Constantine a persecutor of them, he will persuade him to raise them in worldly glory to the stars, and make them lords of Rome, and possess them with princely dignities and revenues. And he hath got as much by over-honoring them, as ever he did by persecuting and despising them. And now in England, when this plot is descried, and we had taken down that superfluous honor, as antichristian, what doth the devil but set in again on the other side? And none is so zealous a reformer as he. He cries down all as antichristian, which he desireth should fall. Their tithes and maintenance are antichristian and oppressive (O pious, merciful devil,) down with them! These church-lands were given by Papists to Popish uses, to maintain

bishops, and deans, and chapters, down with them ! These college-lands, these cathedrals, nay, these churchhouses, or temples (for so I will call them, whether the devil will or no,) all come from idolaters, and are abused to idolatry, down with them ! Nay, think you but he hath taken the boldness to cry out, These priests, these ministers, are all antichristian, seducers, needless, enviers of the spirit of prophesy, and of the gifts of their brethren, monopolizers of preaching, down with them too ! So that though he yet have not what he would have, the old serpent hath done more as a reformer by overdoing, than he did in many a year as a deformer or hinderer of reformation. Yet if he do but see that there is a Sovereign Power that can do him a mischief, he is ready to tell them, they must be merciful, and not deal cruelly with sinners ! Nay, it belongs not to them to reform, or to judge who are heretics and who not, or to restrain false doctrine, or church-disturbers. Christ is sufficient for this himself. How oft hath the devil preached thus, to tie the hands of those that might wound him.

Would you see any further how he hath played this successful game of overdoing ? Why, he hath done as much by it in worship and discipline, as almost in any thing. When he cannot have discipline neglected, he is an over zealous spirit in the breasts of the clergy ; and he persuades them to appoint men penance, and pilgrimages, and to put the necks of princes under their feet. But if this tyranny must be abated, he cries down all discipline, and tells them it is all but tyranny and human inventions ; and this confessing sin to ministers for relief of conscience, and this open confessing in the congregation for a due manifestation of repentance, and satisfaction to the church, that they may hold communion with them, it is all but Popery and priestly domineering.

And in matter of worship, worst of all. When he could not persuade the world to persecute Christ, and to refuse him and his worship, the serpent will be the most zealous worshipper, and saith, as Herod, and with the same mind, " Come and tell me, that I may worship him." He persuades men to do and overdo. He sets them on laying out their revenues in sumptuous fabrics, in fighting to be masters of the holy land and sepulchre of Christ ; on

going pilgrimages ; worshipping saints, angels, shrines, relics, adoring the very bread of the sacrament as God, excessive fastings, choice of meats, numbered prayers on beads, repetitions of words, so many Ave Marias, Pater Nosters, the name Jesus so oft repeated in a breath, so many holidays to saints, canonical hours, even at midnight to pray, and that in Latin for greater reverence, crossings, holy garments, variety of prescribed gestures, kneeling and worshipping before images, sacrificing Christ again to his Father in the mass ; forswearing marriage ; living retiredly, as separate from the world ; multitudes of new, prescribed rules and orders of life ; vowing poverty ; begging without need ; creeping to the cross, holy water, and holy bread, carrying palms, kneeling at altars, bearing candles, ashes ; in baptism, crossing, conjuring out the devil, anointing, anointing, oil ; taking pardons, indulgencies, and dispensations of the pope ; praying for the dead, perambulations, serving God to merit heaven, or to ease souls in purgatory ; doing works of supererogation, with multitudes the like. All these hath the devil added to God's worship, so zealous a worshipper of Christ is he, when he takes that way. Read Mr. Herbert's "*Church Militant of Rome*," pp. 188—190. I could trace this deceiver yet further, and tell you wherein, when he could not hinder reformation in Luther's days, he would needs overdo in reforming ! But O how sad an example of it have we before our eyes in England ! Never people on earth more hot upon reforming ! Never any deeper engaged for it ! The devil could not hinder it by fire and sword ; when he sees that, he will needs turn reformer, as I said before, and he gets the word, and cries down antichrist, and cries up reformation, till he hath done what we see ! He hath made a Babel of our work, by confounding our languages ; for though he will be for reformation too, yet his name is Legion, he is an enemy to the one God, one Mediator and Head, one faith, and one baptism, one heart, and one lip, and one way, unity is the chief butt that he shoots at. Is baptism to be reformed ? Christ is so moderate a Reformer, that he only bids, Down with the symbolical, mystical rite of man's vain addition. But the serpent is a more zealous reformer. He saith, Out with express covenanting ; out with children ; they are a corruption of the or-

dinance. And to others he says, Out with baptism itself. We might follow him thus through other ordinances. Indeed he so overdoes in his reforming, that he would not leave us a Gospel, a ministry, a magistracy to be for Christ, no, nor a Christ ; (though yet he would seem to own a God, and the light of nature.) All these with him are antichristian.

By this time I hope you see that this way of overdoing hath another author than many zealous people do imagine ; and that it is the devil's common, successful trade ; so that his agents in state-assemblies are taught his policy, ' When you have no other way of undoing, let it be by overdoing.' And the same way he takes with the souls of particular persons. If he see them troubled for sin, and he cannot keep them from the knowledge of Christ and free grace, he puts the name of free grace and Gospel-preaching upon Antinomian and libertine errors which subvert the very Gospel and free grace itself. If he see men convinced of this, and that it is neither common nor religious libertinism and sensuality that will bring men to heaven, then he will labor to make Papists of them, and to set them on a task of external formalities, or macerating their bodies with hurtful fastings, watchings, and cold, as if self-murder were the highest pitch of religion, and God had pleasure to see his people torment themselves ! I confess it is very few that ever I knew to have erred far in the austere usage of their bodies. But some I have, and especially poor, melancholy Christians, that are more easily drawn to deal rigorously with their flesh than others be. And such writings as lately have been published by some English Popish formalists, I have known draw men into this snare. I would have all such remember, 1. That God is a Spirit, and will be worshipped in spirit and in truth ; and such worshippers doth he seek. 2. That God will have mercy and not sacrifice ; and that the vitals of religion are in a consumption, when the heat of zeal is drawn too much to the outside ; and that placing most in externals, is the great character of hypocrisy, and is that pharisaical religion to which the doctrine and practice of the Lord Jesus was most opposite, as any that will read the Gospel may soon see. 3. That God hath made our bodies to be his servants, and instruments of righteousness (Rom. vi. 13.), and help-

ful and serviceable to our souls in welldoing. And therefore it is disobedience, it is injustice, it is cruelty to disable them, and causelessly to vex and torment them, much more to destroy them. You may see by sick men, by melancholy men, by madmen and children, how unfit that soul is to know, or love, or serve God, that hath not a fit body to work in and by. The serpent knows this well enough. If he can but get you by excessive fastings, watchings, labors, studies, or other austerities, especially sadness and perplexities of mind, to have a sick body, a crazed brain, or a short life, you will be able to do him but little hurt, and God but little service, besides the pleasure that he takes in your own vexation. Nay, he will hope to make a further advantage of your weakness, and to keep many a soul in the snares of sensuality, by telling them of your miseries, and saying to them, 'Dost thou not see in such a man or woman, what it is to be so holy and precise? They will all run mad at last. If once thou grow so strict, and deny thyself thy pleasures, and take this precise course, thou wilt but make thy life a misery, and never have a merry day again.' Such examples as yours the devil will make use of that he may terrify poor souls from godliness, and represent the word and ways of Christ to them in an odious, and unpleasing, and discouraging shape. Doubtless that God who himself is so merciful to your body, as well as to your soul, would have you to be so too. He that provided so plentifully for its refreshment, would not have you refuse his provision. He that saith that the righteous man is merciful to his beast, no doubt would not have him to be unmerciful to his own body. You are commanded to love your neighbors but as yourself; and therefore by cruelty and unmerciful dealing with your own body, you will go about to justify the like dealings with others. You durst not deny to feed, to clothe, to comfort and refresh the poor, lest Christ should say, "You did it not to me." And how should you dare to deny the same to yourself? How will you answer God for the neglect of all that service which you should have done him, and might, if you had not disabled your bodies and mind? He requireth that you delight yourself in him. And how can you do that when you habituate both mind and body to a sad, dejected, mournful garb? The service that God requires; is, "To serve

him with cheerfulness in the abundance that we possess;" Deut. xxviii. 47. If you think that I here contradict what I said in the former Directions, for pinching the flesh, and denying its desires, you are mistaken. I only shew you the danger of the contrary extreme. God's way lieth between both. The truth is (if you would be resolved how far you may please or displease the flesh) the flesh being ordained to be our servant and God's servant, must be used as a servant. You will give your servant food, and raiment, and wholesome lodging, and good usage, or else you are unjust, and he will be unfit to do your work. But so far as he would master you, or disobey you, you will correct him, or keep him under. You will feed your horse, or else he will not carry you; but if he grow unruly, you must tame him. It is a delusory formality of Papists, to tie all the countries to one time and measure of fasting, as Lent, Fridays, &c. When men's states are so various that many (though not quite sick) have more need of a restoring diet; and those that need fasting, need it not all at once, not in one measure, but at the time, and in the measure, as the taming of their flesh requireth it. As if a physician should proclaim that all his patients should take physic such forty days every year, whether their disease be plethoric or consuming, from fulness or from abstinence, and whether the disease take him at that time of the year, or another. And remember that you must not under pretences of saving the body, disable it to serve God. You will not lay any such correction on your child or servant as shall disable them from their work, but such as shall excite them to it. And understand that all your afflicting your body must be either preventive, as keeping the fire from the thatch, or medicinal and corrective, and not strictly vindictive; for that belongs to your Judge. Though in a subordination to the other ends, the smart or suffering for its fault, is one end, and so it is truly penal or vindictive, as all chastisement is. And so Paul saith, "Behold what revenge," &c. 2 Cor. vii. 11. but as not mere judicial revenge is. Remember therefore, though you must so far tame your body as to bring it into subjection, that you perish not by pampering; yet not so far as to bring it to weakness, and sickness, and unfitness for its duty. Nor yet must you dare to conceit that you please God, or satisfy him for your

sin, by such a wronging and hurting your own body. Such Popish religiousness shews, that men have very low and carnal conceits of God. Was it not a base wickedness in them that offered their children in sacrifice, to think that God would be pleased with such cruelty? Yea, were it not to have directed us to Christ, he would not have accepted of the blood of bulls and goats; it is not sacrifice that he desires. He never was bloodthirsty, nor took any pleasure in the creature's suffering. How can you think then that he will take pleasure in your consuming and destroying your own bodies? It is as unreasonable as to imagine, that he delights to have men cut their own throats, or hang themselves; for pining and consuming one's self is self-murder as well as that. Yet I know no man should draw back from a painful or hazardous work, when God calls him to it, for fear of destroying the flesh; but do not make work or suffering for yourselves. God will lay as much affliction on you as you need, and be thankful if he will enable you to bear that; but you have no need to add more. If yourselves make the suffering, how can you with any encouragement, beg strength of God to bear it? And if you have not strength, what will you do? Nay, how can you pray for deliverance from God's afflictings, when you make more of your own? And thus I have shewed you the danger of overdoing, and what hindrance it is to a settled peace, both of church (state) and soul; though perhaps it may not condemn a particular soul so certainly (in most parts of it) as doing too little will.

5. The next part of my Direction (first expressed) is, 'That you avoid causeless scruples, about doctrines, duties, sins, or your own state.'

These are also engines of the enemy, to batter the peace, and comfort of your soul; he knows that it is cheerful obedience, with a confidence of Christ's merits and mercies that God accepteth; and therefore if he cannot hinder a poor soul from setting upon duty, he will hinder him if he can, by these scruples, from a cheerful and prosperous progress. First, If he can, he will take in scruples about the truth of his religion, and shewing him the many opinions that are in the world, he will labor to bring the poor Christian to a loss. Or else he will assault him by the men of some particular sect, to draw him to that party, and so by corrupting his judg-

ment, to break his peace ; or at least to trouble his head, and divert his thoughts from God, by tedious disputes. The Papists will tell him, that they are the only true Catholic church as if they had got a monopoly or patent for religion, and had confined Christ to themselves who are such notorious abusers of him ; and as if all the churches of Greece, Ethiopia, and the rest of the world, were unhurched by Christ, to humor Master Pope, though they be far more in number, and many of them sounder in doctrine than the Romanists are. Those of other parties will do the like, each one to draw him to their own way. And the devil would make him believe that there are as many religions as there are odd opinions, when alas, the Christian religion is one, and but one, consisting, for the doctrinals, in those fundamentals contained in our creed. And men's lesser erroneous opinions are but the scabs that adhere to their religion. Only the church of Rome is a very leper, whose infectious disease doth compel us to avoid her company. (As for any sort of men that deny the fundamentals, I will not call them by the name of Christians.) So also in duties of worship, satan will be casting in scruples. If they should hear the word, he will cause them to be scrupling the calling of the minister, or something in his doctrine to discourage them. If they should dedicate their children to Christ in the baptismal covenant, he will be raising scruples about the lawfulness of baptizing infants. When they should solace their souls at the Lord's supper, or other communion of the church, he will be raising scruples about the fitness of every one that they are to join with, and whether it be lawful to join with such an ignorant man, or such a wicked man ; or whether it be a true church, or rightly gathered, or governed, or the minister a true minister, and twenty the like. When they should join with the church in singing of God's praises, he will move one to scruple singing David's psalms ; another to scruple singing among the ungodly ; another singing psalms that agree not to every man's condition ; another, because our translation is bad, or our metre defective, and we might have better. When men should spend the Lord's day in God's spiritual worship, he causeth one to scruple, whether the Lord's day be of divine institution. Another he drives into the other extreme, to scruple almost every thing that is not

worship. Whether they may provide their meat on that day (when yet it is a solemn day of thanksgiving, and they scruple not much more on other thanksgiving-days) or whether they may so much as move a stick out of the way. Others he moves to trouble themselves with scruples, as what hour the day begins and ends, and the like. Whereas, if they, 1. Understood that worldly rest is commanded but as help to spiritual worship. 2. And that they must employ as much of that day in God's work as they do of other days in their callings, and rest in the night as at other times, and that God looks to time for work's sake, and not at the work for the time's sake ; this would cast out most of their scruples. The like course Satan takes with Christians in reading, praying in secret, or in their families, teaching their families, reproving sinners, teaching the ignorant, meditation, and all other duties, too long to mention the particular scruples which he thrusts into men's heads, much more to resolve them, which would require a large volume alone.

Now I would entreat all such Christians to consider, how little they please God, and how much they please Satan, and how much they break their own peace, and the peace of the churches. If you send a man on a journey, would you like him better that would stand questioning and scrupling every step he goes, whether he set the right foot before ? Or whether he should go in the foot-path or in the road ? Or him that would cheerfully go on, not thinking which foot goeth forward ; and rather step a little beside the path, and in again, than to stand scrupling when he should be going ? If you send reapers into your harvest, which would you like better, him that would stand scrupling how many straws he should cut down at once, and at what height ; and with fears of cutting them too high or too low, too many at once, or too few, should do you but little work ? Or him that should do his work cheerfully, as well as he can ? Would you not be angry at such childish, unprofitable diligence or curiosity, as is a hindrance to your work ? And is it not so with our Master ? There was but one of those parties in the right that Paul spoke to ; Rom. xiv. xv. And yet he not only persuades them to bear with one another, and not to judge one another, but to receive the weak in faith, and not to doubtful disputations ; but he bids them, " Let every man be fully

persuaded in his own mind.” How? Can he that erreth be fully persuaded in his error? Yes, he may go on boldly and confidently, not troubling himself with demurs in his duty, as long as he took the safer side in his doubt. Not that he should encourage any to venture on sin, or to neglect a due inquiry after God’s mind. But I speak against tormenting scruples, which do no work, but hinder from it, and stay us from our duty.

The same I say against scruples about your sins; Satan will make you believe that every thing is a sin, that he may disquiet you, if he cannot get you to believe that nothing almost is sin, that he may destroy you. You shall not put a bit in your mouth, but he will move a scruple, whether it were not too good, or too much. You shall not clothe yourself, but he will move you to scruple the lawfulness of it. You shall not come into any company, but he will afterwards vex you about every word you spoke, lest you sinned.

The like I may say also about your condition, but more of that anon.

Direct. XXVII. ‘When God hath once shewed you a certainty, or but a strong probability of your sincerity and his especial love, labor to fix this so deep in your apprehension and memory, that it may serve for the time to come, and not only for the present. And leave not your soul too open to changes, upon every new apprehension, nor to question all that is past upon every jealousy; except when some notable declining to the world, and the flesh, or a committing of gross sins, or a wilfulness or carelessness in other sins that you may avoid, do give you just cause of questioning your sincerity, and bringing your soul again to the bar, and your estate to a more exact review.’

Some Antinomian writers and preachers you shall meet with, who will persuade you, whatsoever sins you fall into, never more to question your justification or salvation. I have said enough before to prove their doctrine detestable. Their reason is, because God changeth not as we change, and justification is never lost. To which I answer, 1. God hated us while we were workers of iniquity; Psal. xi. 5. v. 5. and was angry with us when we were children of wrath; Ephes. 1—3. and afterwards he laid by that hatred and wrath; and all this without change. If we cannot reach to apprehend how God’s unchangeableness can stand with

the fullest and most frequent expressions of him in Scripture, must we therefore deny what those expressions do contain? As Austin saith, "Shall we deny that which is plain, because we cannot reach that which is obscure and difficult?" 2. But if these men had well studied the Scriptures, they might have known that the same man that was yesterday hated as an enemy, may to day be reconciled and loved as a son, and that without any change in God; even as it falls out within the reach of our knowledge: for God ruleth the world by his laws; they are his moral instruments; by them he condemneth; by them he justifieth, so far as he is said in this life, before the judgment day, to do it, (unless there be any other secret act of justification with him, which man is not able now to understand.) The change is therefore in our relations, and in the moral actions of the laws. When we are unbelievers, and impenitent, we are related to God as enemies, rebels, unjustified and unpardoned; being such as God's law condemneth and pronounceth enemies, and the law of grace doth not yet justify or pardon; and so God is, as it were, in some sense obliged, according to that law which we are under, to deal with us as enemies, by destroying us; and this is God's hating, wrath, &c. When we repent, return, and believe, our relation is changed; the same law that did condemn us, is relaxed and disabled, and the law of grace doth now acquit us; it pardoneth us, it justifieth us, and God by it: and so God is reconciled to us, when we are such as according to his own law of grace he is, as it were, oblige to forgive and to do good to, and to use as sons. Is not all this apparently without any change in God? Cannot he make a law that shall change its moral action according the change of the actions or inclinations of sinners? And this without any change in God? And so, if it should be that a justified man should fall from God, from Christ, from sincere faith or obedience, the law would condemn him again, and the law of grace would justify him no more (in that state,) and all this without any change in God. 3. If this Antinomian argument would prove any thing, it would prove justification before, and so without, Christ's satisfaction, because there is no change in God. 4. The very point, That no justified man shall ever fall from Christ, is not so clear and fully revealed in Scripture, and past all doubt from the

assault of objections, as that a poor soul in such a relapsed estate should venture his everlasting salvation wholly on this, supposing that he were certain that he was once sincere. For my own part I am persuaded that no rooted believer, that is habitually and groundedly resolved for Christ, and hath crucified the flesh and the world, (as all have that are thoroughly Christ's,) do ever fall quite away from him afterwards. But I dare not lay my salvation on this. And if I were no surer of my salvation, than I am of the truth of this my judgment, to speak freely, my soul would be in a very sad condition. 5. But suppose it as certain and plain as any word in the Gospel, (that a justified man is never quite unjustified;) yet as every new sin brings a new obligation to punishment, (or else they could not be pardoned, as needing no pardon, so must every sin have its particular pardon, and consequently the sinner a particular justification from the guilt of that sin,) besides his first general pardon (and justification :) for to pardon sin before it is committed, is to pardon sin that is no sin, which is a contradiction, and impossibility. Now, though for daily, unavoidable infirmities, there be a pardon of course, upon the title of our habitual faith and repentance ; yet whether in case of gross sin, or more notable defection, this will prove a sufficient title to particular pardon, without the addition of actual repentance ; and what case the sinner is in till that actual repentance and faith, as I told you before, are so difficult questions, (it being ordered by God's great wisdom that they should be so,) that it beseems no wise man to venture his salvation on his own opinion in these. Nay, it is certain, that if gross sinners having opportunity and knowledge of their sins, repent not, they shall perish. And therefore I think, a justified man hath great reason upon such falls, to examine his particular repentance, (as well as his former state,) and not to promise himself, or presume upon a pardon without it. 6. And besides all this, though both the continuance of faith, and non-intercision of justification be never so certain, yet when a man's obedience is so far overthrown, his former evidences and persuasions of his justification will be uncertain to him. Though he have no reason to think that God is changeable, or justification will be lost, yet he hath reason enough to question whether ever he were a true believer, and so were ever justified.

For faith worketh by love ; and they that love Christ will keep his commandments. Libertines and carnal men may talk their pleasure ; but when Satan maintains not their peace, sin will break it : and Dr. Sibbs' words will be found true, "Soul's Conflict," pp. 41, 42. "Though the main pillar of our comfort be the free forgiveness of our sins, yet if there be a neglect of growing in holiness, the soul will never be soundly quiet, because it will be prone to question the truth of justification ; and it is as proper for sin to raise doubts and fears in the conscience, as for rotten flesh and wood to breed worms : where there is not a pure conscience, there is not a pacified conscience," &c. Read the rest.

Thus much I have been fain to premise, lest my words for consolation should occasion security and desolation. But now let me desire you to peruse the Direction, and practice it. If when God hath given you assurance, or strong probabilities of your sincerity, you will make use of it but only for that present time, you will never then have a settled peace in your soul : besides, the great wrong you do to God, by necessitating him to be so often renewing such discoveries, and repeating the same words to you so often over. If your child offend you, would you have him when he is pardoned, no longer to believe it, than you are telling it him ? Should he be still asking you over and over every day, ' Father am I forgiven, or no ? ' Should not one answer serve his turn ? Will you not believe that your money is in your purse or chest any longer than you are looking on it ? Or that your corn is growing on your land, or your cattle in your grounds, any longer than you are looking on them ? By this course a rich man should have no more content than a beggar, longer than he is looking on his money, or goods, or lands ; and when he is looking on one, he should again lose the comfort of all the rest. What hath God given you a memory for, but to lay up former apprehensions, and discoveries, and experiences, and make use of them on all meet occasions afterwards ? Let me therefore persuade you to this great and necessary work. When God hath once resolved your doubts, and shewed you the truth of your faith, love or obedience, write it down, if you can, in your book, (as I have advised you in my Treatise of Rest,) ' Such a day, upon serious perusal of my heart, I found it thus and thus

with myself.' Or at least, write it deep in your memory ; and do not suffer any fancies, or fears, or light surmises, to cause you to question this again, as long as you fall not from the obedience or faith which you then discovered. Alas ! man's apprehension is a most mutable thing ! If you leave your soul open to every new apprehension, you will never be settled : you may think two contrary things of yourself in an hour. You have not always the same opportunity for right discerning, nor the same clearness of apprehension, nor the same outward means to help you, nor the same inward assistance of the Holy Ghost. When you have these, therefore, make use of them, and fix your wavering soul, and take your question and doubt as resolved, and do not tempt God, by calling him to new answers again and again, as if he had given you no answer before. You will never want some occasion of jealousy and fears as long as you have corruption in your heart, and sin in your life, and a tempter to be troubling you ; but if you will suffer any such wind to shake your peace and comforts, you will be always shaking and fluctuating, as a wave of the sea. And you must labor to apprehend not only the uncomfortableness, but the sinfulness also of this course. For though the questioning your own sincerity on every small occasion, be not near so great a sin as the questioning of God's merciful nature, or the truth of his promise, or his readiness to shew mercy to the penitent soul, or the freeness and fulness of the covenant of grace ; yet even this is no contemptible sin. For, 1. You are doing Satan's work, in denying God's graces, and accusing yourself falsely, and so pleasing the devil in disquieting yourself. 2. You slander God's Spirit as well as your own soul, in saying, he hath not renewed and sanctified you, when he hath. 3. This will necessitate you to further unthankfulness, for who can be thankful for a mercy, that thinks he never received it ? 4. This will shut your mouth against all those praises of God, and that heavenly, joyful commemoration of his great, unspeakable love to your soul, which should be the blessed work of your life. 5. This will much abate your love to God, and your sense of the love of Christ in dying for you, and all the rest of your graces, while you are still questioning your interest in God's love. 6. It will lay such a discouragement on your soul, as will both destroy

the sweetness of all duties to you (which is a great evil,) and thereby make you backward to them, and heartless in them : you will have no mind of praying, meditation, or other duties, because all will seem dark to you, and you will think that every thing makes against you. 7. You rob all about you of that cheerful, encouraging example and persuasion which they should have from you, and by which you might win many souls to God. And contrarily you are a discouragement and hindrance to them. I could mention many more sinful aggravations of your denying God's graces in you on every small occasion, which methinks should make you be very tender of it, if not to avoid unnecessary trouble to yourself, yet at least to avoid sin against God.

And what I have said of evidences and assurance, I would have you understand also of your experiences. You must not make use only at the present of your experiences, but lay them up for the time to come. Nor must you tempt God so far as to expect new experiences upon every new scruple or doubt of yours, as the Israelites expected new miracles in the wilderness, still forgetting the old. If a scholar should in his studies forget all that he hath read and learned, and all the resolutions of his doubts which in study he hath attained, and leave his understanding still as an unwritten paper, as a receptive of every mutation and new apprehension, and contrary conceit, as if he had never studied the point before, he will make but a poor proficiency, and have but a fluctuated, unsettled brain. A scholar should make all the studies of his life to compose one entire image of truth in his soul, as a painter makes every line he draws to compose one entire picture of a man ; and as a weaver makes every thread to compose one web ; so should you make all former examinations discoveries, evidences, and experiences, compose one full discovery of your condition, that so you may have a settled peace of soul : and see that you tie both ends together, and neither look on your present troubled state without your former, lest you be unthankful, and unjustly discouraged ; nor on your former state without observance of your present frame of heart and life, lest you deceive yourself, or grow secure. O that you could well observe this Direction ! How much would it help you to escape extremes, and conduce to the settling of a well-

grounded peace, and at once to the well ordering of your whole conversation !

Direct. XXVIII. Be very careful that you create not perplexities and terrors in your own soul, by rash misinterpretations of any passages either of Scripture, of God's providence, or of the sermons or private speeches of ministers: but resolve with patience, yea, with gladness, to suffer preachers to deal with their congregations in the most searching, serious and awakening manner, lest your weakness should be a wrong to the whole assembly, and possibly the undoing of many a sensual, drowsy or obstinate soul, who will not be convinced and awakened by a comforting way of preaching, or by any smoother or gentler means.'

Here are three dangerous enemies to your peace, which (for brevity) I warn you of together.

1. Rash misinterpretations and misapplications of Scripture. Some weak-headed, troubled Christians can scarce read a chapter, or hear one read, but they will find something which they think doth condemn them. If they read of God's wrath and judgment, they think it is meant against them. If they read, "Our God is a consuming fire," they think presently it is themselves that must be the fuel; whereas justice and mercy have each their proper objects; the burning fire will not waste the gold, nor is water the fuel of it; but combustible matter it will presently consume. A humble soul that lies prostrate at Christ's feet, confessing its unworthiness, and bewailing its sinfulness, this is not the object of revenging justice; such a soul bringing Christ's mercies, and pleading them with God, is so far from being the fuel of this consuming fire, that he bringeth that water which will undoubtedly quench it. Yet this Scripture expression of our God, may subdue carnal security even in the best, but not dismay them or discourage them in their hopes. Another reads in Psalm l. "I will set thy sins in order before thee;" and he thinks, certainly God will deal thus by him, not considering that God chargeth only their sins upon them that charge them not by true repentance on themselves, and accept not of Christ who hath discharged them by his blood. It is the excusers, and mincers, and defenders of sin, that love not those that reprove them, and that will not avoid them, or the occasions of them, that would not

be reformed, and will not be persuaded, in whose souls iniquity hath dominion, and that delight in it, it is these on whom God chargeth their sins: "For this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light; and come not to the light, lest their deeds should be reprov'd;" John iii. 20, 21. But for the soul that trembleth at God's word, and comes home to God with shame and sorrow, resolving to return no more to wickedness, God is so far from charging his sins upon him, that he never mentioneth them, as I told you, is evident in the case of the prodigal. He makes not a poor sinner's burden more heavy by hitting him in the teeth with his sins, but makes it the office of his Son to ease him by disburdening him.

Many more texts might be named (and perhaps it would not be lost labor) which troubled souls do misunderstand and misapply; but it would make this writing tedious, which is already swelled so far beyond my first intention.

3. The second enemy of your peace here mentioned, is Misunderstanding and misapplying passages of providence. Nothing more common with troubled souls, than upon every new cross and affliction that befalls them, presently to think, God takes them for hypocrites; and to question their sincerity! As if David and Job had not left them a full warning against this temptation. Do you lose your goods? So did Job. Do you lose your children? So did Job; and that in no very comfortable way. Do you lose your health? So did Job. What if your godly friends should come about you in this case, and bend all their wits and speeches to persuade you that you are but a hypocrite, as Job's friends did by him, would not this put you harder to it? Yet could Job resolve, "I will not let go mine integrity till I die." I know God's chastisements are all paternal punishments; and that Christians should search and try their hearts and ways at such times; but not conclude that they are graceless ever the more for being afflicted, seeing God chasteneth every son whom he receiveth; Heb. xii. 6, 7. And in searching after sin itself in your afflictions, be sure that you make the word, and not your sufferings, the rule to discover how far you have sinned; and let afflictions only quicken you to try by the word. How many a soul have I known that by misinterpreting providences,

have in a blind jealousy, been turned quite from truth and duty, supposing it had been error and sin ; and all because of their afflictions. As a foolish man in his sickness accuseth the last meat that he eat before he fell sick, though it might be the wholesomest that ever he eat, and the disease may have many causes which he is ignorant of. One man being sick, a busy seducing Papist comes to him (for it is their use to take such opportunities) and tells him, ‘ It is God’s hand upon you for forsaking or straying from the Roman Catholic Church, and God hath sent this affliction to bring you home. All your ancestors lived and died in this church, and so must you if ever you will be saved.’ The poor, jealous, affrighted sinner hearing this, and through his ignorance being unable to answer him, thinks it even true, and presently turns Papist. In the same manner do most other sects. How many have the Antinomians and Anabaptists thus seduced ! Finding a poor silly woman (for it is most commonly with them) to be under sad doubts and distress of soul, one tells her, ‘ It is God’s hand on you to convince you of error, and to bring you to submit to the ordinance of baptism ;’ and upon this many have been rebaptised, and put their foot into the snare which I have yet seen few escape and draw back from. Another comes and tells the troubled soul, ‘ It is legal preaching, and looking at something in yourself for peace and comfort, which hath brought you to this distress : as long as you follow these legal preachers, and read their books, and look at any thing in yourself, and seek assurance from marks within you, it will never be better with you. These preachers understand not the nature of free grace, nor ever tasted it themselves, and therefore they cannot preach it, but despise it. You must know that grace is so free that the covenant hath no condition : you must believe, and not look after the marks. And believing is but to be persuaded that God is reconciled to you, and hath forgiven you ; for you were justified before you were born, if you are one of the elect, and can but believe it. It is not any thing of your own, by which you can be justified ; nor is it any sin of yours that can unjustify. It is the witness of the Spirit only persuading you of your justification and adoption, that can give you assurance ; and fetching it from any thing in yourself, is but a resting on your own righteousness, and

forsaking Christ.' When the Antinomian hath but sung this ignorant charm to a poor soul as ignorant as himself, and prepared by terrors to entertain the impression, presently it (oft) takes, and the sinner without a wonder of mercy is undone. This doctrine, which subverteth the very scope of the Gospel, being entertained, subverteth his faith and obedience ; and usually the libertinism of his opinion is seen in his liberty of conscience, and licentious practices ; and his trouble of mind is cured, as a burning fever by opium, which give him such a sleep, that he never awaketh till he be in another world. Yet these errors are so gross, and so fully against the express texts of Scripture, that if ministers would condescendingly, lovingly and familiarly deal with them and do their duty, I should hope many well meaning souls might be recovered. Thus you see the danger of rash interpreting, and so misinterpreting providences. As such interpretations of prosperity and success delude not only the Mahometan world, and the profane world, but many that seemed godly, so many such interpretations of adversity and crosses do ; especially if the seducer be but kind and liberal to relieve them in their adversity, he may do with many poor souls almost what he please.

3. The third enemy to your peace here mentioned, is, Misinterpreting or misapplying the passages of preachers in their sermons, writings or private speeches. A minister cannot deal thoroughly or seriously with any sort of sinners, but some fearful, troubled souls apply all to themselves. I must entreat you to avoid this fault, or else you will turn God's ordinances and the daily food of your souls, into bitterness and wormwood, and all through your mistakes. I think there are few ministers so preach, but you might perceive whom they mean, and they so difference as to tell you who they speak to. I confess it is a better sign of an honest heart and self-judging conscience, to say, ' He speaks now to me, this is my case ;' than to say, He speaks now to such or such a one, this is their case.' For it is the property of hypocrites to have their eye most abroad, and in every duty to be minding most the faults of others : and you may much discern such in their prayers, in that they will fill their confessions most with other men's sins, and you may feel them all the while in the bosom of their neigh-

bors, when you may even feel a sincere man speaking his own heart, and most opening his own bosom to God. But though self-applying and self-searching be far the better sign, yet must not any wise Christian do it mistakingly : for that may breed abundance of very sad effects. For besides the aforesaid embittering of God's ordinances to you, and so discouraging you from them, do but consider what a grief and a snare you may prove to your minister. A grief it must needs be to him who knows he should not make sad the soul of the innocent, to think that he cannot avoid it, without avoiding his duty. When God hath put two several messages in our mouths ; " Say to the righteous, it shall be well with him ;" and " Say to the wicked it shall be ill with him ;" Isaiah iii. 10, 11. " He that believeth shall be saved ; he that believeth not shall be damned ;" and we speak both ; will you take that as spoken to you, which is spoken to the unbeliever and the wicked ? Alas, how is it possible then for us to forbear troubling you ? If you will put your head under every stroke that we give against sin and sinners, how can we help it if you smart ? What a sad case are we in by such misapplications ! We have but two messages to deliver, and both are usually lost by misapplications. The wicked saith, ' I am the righteous, and therefore it shall go well with me.' The righteous saith, ' I am the wicked, and therefore it shall go ill with me.' The unbeliever saith, ' I am a believer, and therefore am justified.' The believer saith, ' I am an unbeliever, and therefore am condemned.' Nay, it is not only the loss of our preaching, but we oft do them much harm ; for they are hardened that should be humbled ; and they are wounded more that should be healed. A minister must now needs tell them who he means by the believer, and who by the unbeliever ; who by the righteous, and who by the wicked : and yet when he hath done it as accurately, and as cautelously as he can, misapplying souls will wrong themselves by it. So that because people cannot see the distinguishing line, it therefore comes to pass, that few are comforted but when ministers preach nothing else but comfort ; and few humbled, but where ministers bend almost all their endeavors that way, that people can feel almost nothing else from him. But for him that equally would divide to each their portion, each one

snatcheth up the part of another, and he oft misseth of profiting either ; and yet this is the course that we must take.

And what a snare is this to us ; as well as a grief ! What if we should be so moved with compassion of your troubles, as to fit almost all our doctrine and application to you, what a fearful guilt should we draw upon our own souls !

Nay, what a snare may you thus prove to the greater part of the congregation ! Alas, we have seldom past one, or two, or three troubled consciences in an auditory, (and perhaps some of their troubles be the fruit of such wilful sinning, that they have more need of greater, yet) should we now neglect all the rest of these poor souls, to preach only to you ? O how many an ignorant hardhearted sinner comes before God every day ! Shall we let such go away as they came, without ever a blow to awaken them and stir their hearts, when, alas, all that ever we can do is too little ! When we preach you into tears and trembling, we preach them asleep ! Could we speak words, it would scarce make them feel, when you through misapplication have gone home with anguish and fears. How few of all these have been pricked at the heart, and said, “ What shall we do to be saved ? ” Have you no pity now on such stupid souls as these ? I fear this one distemper of yours, that you cannot bear this rousing preaching, doth betray another and greater sin ; look to it, I beseech you, for I think I have spied out the cause of your trouble ; are you not yourself too great a stranger to poor stupid sinners ? and come not among them ? or pity them not as you should ? And do not your duty for the saving of their souls ; but think it belongs not to you but to others ? Do you use to deal with servants and neighbors about you, and tell them of sin and misery, and the remedy, and seek to draw their hearts to Christ, and bring them to duty ? I doubt you do little in this ; (and that is sad unmercifulness ;) for if you did, truly you could not choose but find such miserable ignorance, such senselessness and blockishness, such hating reproof and unwillingness to be reformed, such love of this world, and slavery to the flesh, and and so little favor of Christ, grace, heaven, and the things of the Spirit, and especially such an unteachableness, untractableness (as thorns and briars) and so great a difficulty moving them an inch

from what they are, that you would have been willing ever after to have ministers preach more rousingly than they do, and you would be glad for their sakes, when you heard that which might awake them and prick them to the heart. Yea, if you had tried how hard a work it is to bring worldly, formal hypocrites to see their hypocrisy, or to come over to Christ from the creature, and to be in good earnest in the business of their salvation, you would be glad to have preachers search them to the quick, and ransack their hearts, and help them against their affected and obstinate self-delusions.

Besides, you should consider that their case is far different from yours ; your disease is pain and trouble, they are stark dead : you have God's favor and doubt of it, they are his enemies and never suspect it : you want comfort, and they want pardon and life : if your disease should never here be cured, it is but going more sadly to heaven, but if they be not recovered by regeneration, they must lie forever in hell. And should we not then pity them more than you ; and study more for them ; and preach more for them ; and rather forget you in a sermon than them ? Should you not wish us so to do ? Should we more regard the comforting of one, than the saving of a hundred ? Nay more, we should not only neglect them, but dangerously hurt them, if we should preach too much to the case of troubled souls ; for you are not so apt to mis-apply passages of terror, and to take their portion, as they are apt to apply to themselves such passages for comfort, and take your portion to themselves.

I know some will say, that it is preaching Christ, and setting forth God's love, that will win them best, and terrors do but make unwilling, hypocritical professors. This makes me remember how I have heard some preachers of the times, blame their brethren for not preaching Christ to their people, when they preached the danger of rejecting Christ, disobeying him, and resisting his Spirit. Do these men think that it is no preaching Christ (when we have first many years told men the fulness of his satisfaction, the freeness and general extent of his covenant or promise, and the riches of his grace, and the incomprehensibleness of his glory, and the truth of all) to tell them afterwards the danger of refusing, neglecting and disobeying him ; and of living after the flesh, and prefer-

ing the world before him ; and serving mammon, and falling off in persecution, and avoiding the cross, and yielding in temptation, and quenching the Spirit, and declining from their first love, and not improving their talents, and not forgiving and loving their brethren, yea, and enemies ? &c. Is none of this Gospel ? nor preaching Christ ? Yea, is not repentance itself (except despairing repentance) proper to the Gospel, seeing the law excludeth it, and all manner of hope ? Blame me not, reader, if I be zealous against these men, that not only know no better what preaching Christ is, but in their ignorance reproach their brethren for not preaching Christ, and withal condemn Christ himself and all his apostles. Do they think that Christ himself knew not what it was to preach Christ ? Or that he set us a pattern too low for our imitation ? I desire them soberly to read Matt. v. vi. vii. x. xxv. Rom. viii. iv. from the first verse to the fourteenth. Rom. ii. Heb. ii. iv. v. x. and then tell me whether we preach as Christ and his apostles did. But to the objection ; I answer, 1. We do set forth God's love, and the fullness of Christ, and the sufficiency of his death and satisfaction for all, and the freeness and extent of his offer and promise of mercy, and his readiness to welcome returning sinners : this we do first (mixing with this the discovery of their natural misery by sin, which must be first known ;) and next we shew them the danger of rejecting Christ and his office. 2. When we find men settled under the preaching of free grace, in a base contempt or sleepy neglect of it, preferring the world and their carnal pleasures and ease, before all the glory of heaven, and riches of Christ and grace, is it not time for us to say, " How shall ye escape, if ye neglect so great salvation ? " Heb. ii. 3. " And of how much sorer punishment shall he be thought worthy, that treads under foot the blood of the covenant ? " Heb. x. 26. When men grow careless and unbelieving, must we not say, " Take heed lest a promise being left of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it ? " Heb. iv. 1. 3. Hath not Christ led us, commanded us, and taught us this way ? " Except ye repent, ye shall all perish," was his doctrine ; Luke xiii. 3. 5. " Go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature : " (what is that Gospel ?) " He that believeth shall be saved, and he believeth not shall be

dained ;” Mark xvi. 16. “ Those mine enemies that would not I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me ;” Luke xix 27. Doth any of the apostles speak more of hell-fire, and the worm that never dieth, and the fire that never is quenched, than Christ himself doth ? And do not his apostles go the same way ; even Paul, the great preacher of faith ? (2 Thess. i. 7—9. ii. 12, &c.) What more common ? Alas, what work should we make, if we should stroke and smooth all men with Antinomian language ? It were the way to please all the sensual, profane multitude, but it is none of Christ’s way to save their souls. I am ready to think that these men would have Christ preached as the Papists would have him prayed to ; to say, ‘ Jesu, Jesu, Jesu,’ nine times together, and this oft over, is their praying to him ; and to have Christ’s name oft in the preacher’s mouth, some men think is the right preaching Christ.

Let me now desire you hereafter, to be glad to hear ministers awaken the profane and dead-hearted hearers, and search all to the quick, and misapply nothing to yourself ; but if you think any passage doth nearly concern you, open your mind to the minister privately, when he may satisfy you more fully, and that without doing hurt to others : and consider what a strait ministers are in, that have so many of so different conditions, inclinations, and conversations to preach to:

Direct. XXIX. ‘ Be sure you forget not to distinguish between causes of doubting of your sincerity, and causes of mere humiliation, repentance, and amendment ; and do not raise doubtings and fears, where God calleth you but to humiliation, amendment, and fresh recourse to Christ.’

This rule is of so great moment to your peace, that you will have daily use for it, and can never maintain any true settled peace without the practice of it. What more common than for poor Christians to pour out a multitude of complaints of their weaknesses, and wants, and miscarriages ; and never consider all the while that there may be cause of sorrow in these, when yet there is no cause of doubting of their sincerity. I have shewed before, that in gross falls and great backslidings, doubtings will arise, and sometimes our fears and jealousies may not be without cause ; but

it is not ordinary infirmities, nor every sin which might have been avoided, that is just cause of doubting ; nay, your very humiliation must no further be endeavored than it tends to your recovery, and to the honoring of mercy : for it is possible that you may exceed in the measure of your griefs. You must therefore first be resolved, wherein the truth of saving grace doth consist, and then in all your failings and weaknesses first know, whether they contradict sincerity in itself, and are such as may give just cause to question your sincerity : if they be not (as the ordinary infirmities of believers are not,) then you may and must be humbled for them, but you may not doubt of your salvation for them. I told you before by what marks you may discern your sincerity ; that is, wherein the nature of saving faith and holiness doth consist ; keep that in your eye, and as long as you find that sure and clear, let nothing make you doubt of your right to Christ and glory. But, alas ! how people do contradict the will of God in this ! When you have sinned, God would have you bewail your folly and unkind dealing, and fly to mercy through Christ, and this you will not do ; but he would not have you torment yourselves with fears of damnation, and questioning his love, and yet this you will do. You may discern by this, that humiliation and reformation are sure of God, man's heart is so backward to it ; and that vexations, doubts and fears in true Christians that should be comfortable, are not of God, man's nature is so prone to them (though the ungodly that should fear and doubt, are as backward to it.)

I think it will not be unseasonable here to lay down the particular doubts that usually trouble sincere believers, and see how far they may be just, and how far unjust and causeless ; and most of them shall be from my own former experience ; and such as I have been most troubled with myself, and the rest such as are incident to true Christians, and too usual with them.

Doubt. 1. 'I have often heard and read in the best divines, that grace is not born with us, and therefore Satan hath always possession before Christ, and keeps that possession in peace, till Christ come and bind him and cast him out ; and that this is so great a work that it cannot choose but be observed, and forever remembered by the soul where it is wrought ; yea, the several steps and

passages of it may be all observed: first casting down, and then lifting up; first wounding and killing, and then healing and reviving. But I have not observed the distinct parts and passages of this change in me, nay, I know of no such sudden observable change at all: I cannot remember that ever I was first killed, and then revived: nor do I know by what minister, nor at what sermon, or other means that work which is upon me was wrought: no, nor what day, or month, or year it was begun. I have slid insensibly into a profession of religion, I know not how; and therefore I fear that I am not sincere, and the work of true regeneration was never yet wrought upon my soul.'

Ans. I will lay down the full answer to this, in these propositions. 1. It is true that grace is not natural to us, or conveyed by generation. 2. Yet it is as true that grace is given to our children as well as to us. That it may be so, and is so with some, all will grant who believe that infants may be, and are saved: and that it is so with the infants of believers, I have fully proved in my Book of Baptism; but mark what grace I mean. The grace of remission of original sin, the children of all true believers have at least a high probability of, if not a full certainty; their parent accepting it for himself and them, and dedicating them to Christ, and engaging them in his covenant, so that he takes them for his people, and they take him for their Lord and Saviour. And for the grace of inward renewing of their natures or disposition, it is a secret to us, utterly unknown whether God use to do it in infants or no. 3. God's first ordained way for the working of inward holiness is by parents' education of their children, and not by the public ministry of the word; of which more anon. 4. All godly parents do acquaint their children with the doctrine of Christ in their infancy, as soon as they are capable of receiving it, and do afterwards inculcate it on them more and more. 5. These instructions of parents are usually seconded by the workings of the Spirit, according to the capacity of the child, opening their understandings to receive it, and making an impression thereby upon the heart. 6. When these instructions and inward workings of the Spirit are just past the preparatory part, and above the highest step of common grace, and have attained to special saving grace, is ordinarily undiscerni-

ble : and therefore, as I have shewed already, in God's usual way of working grace, men cannot know the just day or time when they began to be in the state of grace. And though men that have long lived in profaneness, and are changed suddenly, may conjecture near at the time ; yet those that God hath been working on early in their youth, yea, or afterwards by slow degrees, cannot know the time of their first receiving the Spirit. 8. The memories of all men are so slippery, and one thought so suddenly thrust out by another, that many a thousand souls forget those particular workings which they have truly felt. 9. The memories of children are far weaker than of others ; and therefore it is less probable that all the Spirit's workings should by them be remembered. 10. And the motions of grace are so various, sometimes stirring one affection, and sometimes another, sometimes beginning with smaller motions, and then moving more strongly and sensibly, that it is usual for later motions which are more deeply affecting, to make us overlook all the former, or take them for nothing. 11. God dealeth very variously with his chosen in their conversion, as to the accidentals and circumstantials of the work. Some he calleth not home till they have run a long race in the way of rebellion, in open drunkenness, swearing, worldliness and derision of holiness : these he usually humbleth more deeply, and they can better observe the several steps of the Spirit in the work ; (and yet not always neither.) Others he so restraineth in their youth, that though they have not saving grace, yet they are not guilty of any gross sins, but have a liking to the people and ways of God : and yet he doth not savingly convert them till long after. It is much harder for these to discern the time or manner of their conversion ; yet usually some conjectures they may make : and usually their humiliation is not so deep. Others, as is said, have the saving workings of the Spirit in their very childhood, and these can least of all discern the certain time or order. The ordinary way of God's dealing with those that are children of godly parents, and have good education, is, by giving them some liking of godly persons and ways, some conscience of sin, some repentance and recourse by prayer to God in Christ for mercy ; yet youthful lusts and folly, and ill company, do usually much stifle it, till at last, by some affliction, or sermon, or

book, or good company, God setteth home the work, and makes them more resolute and victorious Christians. These people can remember that they had convictions, and stirring convictions when they were young, and the other forementioned works, they can remember some more notable rousings and awakenings long after, and perhaps they have had many such fits and steps, and the work hath stood at this pass for a long time, even many years together. But at which of all these changes it was that the soul began to be savingly sincere, I think is next to an impossibility to discern. According to that experience which I have had of the state of Christians, I am forced to judge the most of the children of the godly that ever are renewed, are renewed in their childhood, or much towards it then done, and that among forty Christians there is not one that can certainly name the month in which his soul first began to be sincere; and among a thousand Christians, I think not not one can name the hour. The sermon which awakened them, they may name, but not the hour when they first arrived at a saving sincerity.

My advice therefore to all Christians, is this: Find Christ by his Spirit dwelling in your hearts, and then never trouble yourselves, though you know not the time or manner of his entrance. Do you value Christ above the world, and resolve to choose him before the world, and perform these resolutions? Then need you not doubt but the Spirit of Jesus is victorious in you.

Doubt 2. 'But I have oft read and heard, that a man cannot come to Christ till he feel the heavy burden of sin. It is the weary and heavy-laden that Christ calleth to him. He bindeth up only the brokenhearted; he is a Physician only to those that feel themselves sick; he brings men to heaven by the gates of hell. They must be able to say, I am in a lost condition, and in a state of damnation, and if I should die this hour I must perish forever, before Christ will deliver them. God will throw away the blood of his son on those that feel not their absolute necessity of it, and that they are undone without it. But it was never thus with me to this day.'

Ans. 1. You must distinguish carefully between repentance as it is in the mind and will, and as it shews itself in the passion of

sorrow. All that have saving interest in Christ, have their judgments and wills so far changed, that they know that they are sinners, and that there is no way to the obtaining of pardon and salvation but by Christ, and the free mercy of God in him; and thereupon they are convinced that if they remain without the grace of Christ, they are undone forever. Whereupon they understanding that Christ and mercy is offered to them in the gospel, do heartily and thankfully accept the offer, and would not be without Christ, or change their hopes of his grace for all the world, and do resolve to wait upon him for the further discovery of his mercy, and the workings of his Spirit, in a constant and conscionable use of his means, and to be ruled by him, to their power. Is it not thus with you? If it be, here is the life and substance of repentance, which consisteth in this change of the mind and heart, and you have no cause to doubt of the truth of it, for want of more deep and passionate humiliation. 2. I have told you before, how uncertain and inconstant the passionate effects of grace are, and how unfit to judge by, and given you several reasons of it. Yet I doubt not but some work upon the affections there is, as well as on the will and understanding; but with so great diversity of manner and degrees, that it is not safe judging by it only or chiefly. Is there no degree of sorrow or trouble that hath touched your heart for your *sin* or *misery*? If your affections were no whit stirred, you would *hardly* be moved to action, to use means, or avoid iniquity, much less would you so oft complain as you do. 3. If God prevented those heinous sins in the time of your unregeneracy, which those usually are guilty of who are called to so deep a degree of sorrow, you should rather be thankful that your wound was not deeper, than troubled that the cure cost you no dearer. Look well whether the cure be wrought in the change of your heart and life from the world to God by Christ, and then you need not be troubled that it was wrought so easily. 4. Were you not acquainted with the evil of sin, and danger and misery of sinners, in your very childhood, and also of the necessity of a Saviour, and that Christ died to save all sinners that will believe and repent? And hath not this fastened on your heart, and been working in you by degrees ever since? If it be so, then you cannot expect that you should have such deep terrors as those

that never hear of sin and Christ till the news come upon them suddenly in the ripeness of their sin. There is a great deal of difference betwixt the conversion of a Jew, or any other infidel, who is brought on the sudden to know the doctrine of sin, misery and salvation by Christ; and the conversion of a professor of the Christian religion, who hath known this doctrine in some sort from his childhood, and who hath a sound religion, though he be not sound in his religion, and so needs not a conversion to a sound faith, but only a soundness in the faith. The suddenness of the news must needs make those violent commotions and changes in the one, which cannot ordinarily be expected in the other, who is acquainted so early with the truth, and by such degrees. 5. But suppose you heard nothing of sin and misery, and a Redeemer in your childhood, or at least understood it not (which yet is unlikely,) yet let me ask you this: Did not that preacher, or that book, or whatever other means God used for your conversion, reveal to you misery and mercy both together? Did not you hear and believe that Christ died for sin, as soon as you understood your sin and misery? Sure I am that the Scripture reveals both together; and so doth every sound preacher, and every sound writer (notwithstanding that the slanderous Antinomians do shamefully proclaim that we preach not Christ, but the law.) This being so, you must easily apprehend that it must needs abate very much of the terror, which would else have been unavoidable. If you had read or heard that you were a sinner, and the child of hell, and of God's wrath, and that there was no remedy, (which is such a preaching of the law, as we must not use to any in the world, nor any since the first promise to Adam, must receive;) yea, or if you had heard nothing of a Saviour for a year, or a day, or an hour after you had heard that you were an heir of hell, and so the remedy had been but concealed from you, though not denied (which ordinarily must not be done,) then you might in all likelihood have found some more terrors of soul that hour. But when you heard that your sin was pardonable, as soon as you heard that you were a sinner, and heard that your misery had a sufficient remedy provided, if you would accept it, or at least that it was not remediless, and this as soon as you heard of that misery, what wonder is it if this exceedingly

abate your fears and troubles! Suppose two men go to visit two several neighbors that have the plague, and one of them saith, 'It is the plague that is on you; you are but a dead man.' The other saith to the other sick person, 'It is the plague that you have; but here is our physician at the next door that hath a receipt that will cure it as infallibly and as easily as if it were but the prick of a pin, he hath cured thousands, and never failed one that took his receipt, but if you will not send to him, and trust him, and take his receipt, there is no hopes of you.' Tell me now whether the first of these sick persons be not like to be more troubled than the other? And whether it will not remove almost all the fears and troubles of the latter, to hear of a certain remedy as soon as he heareth of the disease? Though some trouble he must needs have to think that he hath a disease in itself so desperate or loathsome. Nay, let me tell you, so the cure be but well done, the less terrors and despairing fear you were put upon, the more credit is it to your physician and his apothecary, Christ and the preacher, or instrument, that did the work; and therefore you should rather praise your physician, than question the cure.

Doubt. 3. 'But it is common with all the world to consent to the religion that they are bred up in, and somewhat affected with it, and to make conscience of obeying the precepts of it. So do the Jews in theirs; the Mahometans in theirs. And I fear it is no other work on my soul but the mere force of education, that maketh me religious, and that I had never that great renewing work of the Spirit upon my soul; and so that all my religion is but mere opinion, or notions in my brain.'

Ans. 1. All the religions in the world, besides the Christian religion, have either much error and wickedness mixed with some truth of God, or they contain some lesser parcel of that truth alone (as the Jews;) only the Christian religion hath that whole truth which is saving. Now so much of God's truth as there is in any of these religions, so much it may work good effects upon their souls; as the knowledge of the Godhead, and that God is holy, good, just, merciful, and that he sheweth them much undeserved mercy in his daily providences, &c. But mark these two things, (1.) That all persons of false religions do more easily and greedily

embrace the false part of their religion than the true ; and that they are zealous for, and practice with all their might, because their natural corruption doth befriend it, and is as combustible fuel for the fire of hell to catch in ; but that truth of God which is mixed with their error, if it be practical, they fight against it, and abhor it while they hold it, because it crosseth their lusts, insomuch that it is usually but some few of the more convinced and civil that God in providence maketh the main instrument of continuing those truths of his in that part of the wicked world. For we find that even among Pagans, the profaner and more sensual sort did deride the better sort, as our profane Christians do the godly whom they called Puritans. (2.) Note, That the truth of God which in these false religions is still acknowledged, is so small a part, and so oppressed by errors, that it is not sufficient to their salvation (that is, to give them any sound hope,) nor is it sufficient to make such clear, and deep, and powerful impressions in their minds, as may make them holy or truly heavenly, or may overcome in them the interest of the world and the flesh.

This being so, you may see great reason why a Turk or a heathen may be zealous for his religion without God's Spirit, or any true sanctification, when yet you cannot be so truly zealous for yours without it. Indeed the speculative part of our religion, separated from the practical, or from the hard and self-denying part of the practical, many a wicked man may be zealous for ; as to maintain the Godhead, or that God is merciful, &c. Or to maintain against the Jews that Jesus is the Christ ; or against the Turks, that he is the only Redeemer and teacher of the church ; or against the Papists, that all the Christians in the world are Christ's church as well as the Romans ; and against the Socinians and Arians that Christ is God, &c. But this is but a small part of our religion ; nor doth this, or any heathenish zeal, sanctify the heart, or truly mortify the flesh, or overcome the world. They may condemn life, and cast it away for their pride and vain-glory ; but not for the hopes of a holy and blessed life with God. This is but the prevalency of one corruption against another, or rather of vice against nature. There is a common grace of God that goeth along with common truths, and according to the measure of their obedience to the truth, such was

the change it wrought ; which was done by common truths, and common grace together, but not by their false mixtures at all. But God hath annexed his special grace only to the special truths of the Gospel or Christian religion. If therefore God do by common grace, work a great change on a heathen, by the means of common truths, and do by his special grace work a greater and special change on you, by the means of the special truths of the Gospel, have you any reason hereupon to suspect your condition? Or should you not rather both admire that providence and common grace which is manifested without the church, and humbly, rejoicingly, and thankfully embrace that special saving grace, which is manifested to yourself above them?

2. And for that which you speak of education, you have as much cause to doubt of your conversion, because it was wrought by public preaching, as because it was wrought by education. For, 1. Both are by the Gospel : for it is the Gospel that your parents taught you, as well as which the preacher teacheth you. 2. I have shewed you, that if parents did not shamefully neglect their duties, the word publicly preached would not be the ordinary instrument of regeneration to the children of true Christians, but would only build them up, and direct them in the faith, and in obedience. The proof is very plain : If we should speak nothing of the interest of our infants in the covenant grace, upon the conditional force of their parents' faith, nor of their baptism ; yet, Deut. vi. Ephes. vi. and oft in the Proverbs, you may find, that it is God's strict command, that parents should teach God's word to their children, and bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord ; yea, with a prediction or half promise, that if we "train up a child in the way he should go, when he is old he shall not depart from it;" Prov. xxii. 6. Now it is certain that God will usually bless that which he appointeth to be the usual means, if it be rightly used. For he hath appointed no means to be used in vain.

I hope therefore by this time you see, that instead of being troubled, that the work was done on your soul by the means of education : i. You had more reason to be troubled if it had been done first by the public preaching of the word ; for it should grieve you at the heart to think, 1. That you lived in an unregenerate state so long

and spent your childhood in vanity and sin, and thought not seriously on God and your salvation, for so many years together. 2. And that you or your parent's sin should provoke God so long to withdraw his Spirit and deny you his grace. ii. You may see also what inconceivable thanks you owe to God, who made education the means of your early change: 1. In that he prevented so many and grievous sins which else you would have been guilty of. (And you may read in David's and Manasseh's case, that even pardoned sins have oftentimes very sad effects left behind them.) 2. That you have enjoyed God's Spirit and love so much longer than else you would have done. 3. That iniquity took not so deep rooting in you, as by custom it would have done. 4. That the devil cannot glory of that service which you did him, as else he might; and that the church is not so much the worse, as else it might have been by the mischief you would have done; and that you need not all your days look back with so much trouble, as else you must, upon the effects of your ill doing; nor with Paul, to think of one Stephen; yea, many saints, in whose blood you first embrued your hands; and to cry out. 'I was born out of due time. I am not worthy to be called a Christian, because I persecuted the church of God. I was mad against them, and persecuted them into several cities. I was sometimes foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts and pleasures.' Would you rather that God had permitted you to do this? 5. And methinks it should be a comfort to you, that your own father was the instrument of your spiritual good; that he that was the means of your generation, was the means of your regeneration, both because it will be a double comfort to your parents, and because it will endear and engage you to them in a double bond. For my part, I know not what God did secretly in my heart, before I had the use of memory and reason; but the first good that ever I felt on my soul, was from the counsels and teachings of my own father in my childhood; and I take it now for a double mercy, being more glad that he was the instrument to do me good, than if it had been the best preacher in the world. How foul an oversight is it then, that you should be troubled at one of the choicest mercies of your life, yea, that your life

was capable of, and for which you owe to God such abundant thanks !

Doubt. 4. ' But my great fear is, that the life of grace is not yet within me, because I am so void of spiritual sense and feeling. Methinks I am in spiritual things as dead as a block, and my heart as hard as a rock, or the nether millstone. Grace is a principle of new life, and life is a principle of sense and motion ; it causeth vigor and activity. Such should I have in duty, if I had the life of grace. But I feel the great curse of a dead heart within me. God seems to withdraw his quickening Spirit, and to forsake me ; and to give me up to the hardness of my heart. If I were in covenant with him, I should feel the blessing of the covenant within me ; the hard heart would be taken out of my body, and a heart of flesh, a soft heart would be given to me. But I cannot weep one tear for my sins. I can think on the blood of Christ, and of my bloody sins that caused it, and all will not wring one tear from mine eyes ; and therefore, I fear, that my soul is yet destitute of the life of grace.'

Ans. 1. A soft heart consisteth in two things. (1.) That the will be persuadable, tractable, and yielding to God, and pliable to his will. (2.) That the affections or passions be somewhat moved herewithal about spiritual things. Some degree more or less of the latter, doth concur with the former ; but I have told you, that it is the former, wherein the heart and life of grace doth lie, and that the latter is very various, and uncertain to try by. Many do much overlook the Scripture meaning of the word hardheartedness. Mark it up and down concerning the Israelites, who are so oft charged by Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets, to be hardhearted, or to harden their hearts, or stiffen their necks ; and you will find that the most usual meaning of the Holy Ghost is this, They were an intractable, disobedient, obstinate people ; or as the Greek word in the New Testament signifieth, which we often translate unbelieving, they were an unpersuadable people ; no saying would serve them. They set light by God's commands, promises, and severest threatenings, and judgments themselves ; nothing would move them to forsake their sins, and obey the voice of God. You shall find that hardness of heart is seldom put for

want of tears, or a melting, weeping disposition ; and never at all for the want of such tears, where the will is tractable and obedient. I pray you examine yourself then according to this rule. God offereth his love in Christ, and Christ with all his benefits, to you. Are you willing to accept them ? He commandeth you to worship him, and use his ordinances, and love his people, and others, and to forsake your known iniquities, so far that they may not have dominion over you. Are you willing to this ? He commandeth you to take him for your God, and Christ for your Redeemer, and stick to him for better and worse, and never forsake him. Are you willing to do this ? If you have a stiff, rebellious heart, and will not accept of Christ and grace, and will rather let go Christ than the world, and will not be persuaded from your known iniquities, but are loath to leave them, and love not to be reformed, and will not set upon those duties as you are able, which God requireth, and you are fully convinced of, then are you hard-hearted in the Scripture sense. But if you are glad to have Christ with all your heart, upon the terms that he is offered to you in the Gospel, and you do walk daily in the way of duty as you can, and are willing to pray, and willing to hear and wait on God in his ordinances, and willing to have all God's graces formed within you, and willing to let go your most profitable and sweetest sins, and it is your daily desires, O that I could seek God, and do his will more faithfully, zealously, and pleasingly than I do ! O that I were rid of this body of sin ; these carnal, corrupt, and worldly inclinations ! And that I were as holy as the best of God's saints on earth ! And if when it comes to practice, whether you should obey or no, though some unwillingness to duty, and willingness to sin be in you, you are offended at it, and the greater bent of your will is for God, and it is but the lesser which is towards sin, and therefore the world and flesh do not lead you captive, and you live not wilfully in avoidable sins, nor at all in gross sin ! I say, if it be thus with you, then you have the blessing of a soft heart, a heart of flesh, a new heart ; for it is a willing, obedient, tractable heart, opposed to obstinacy in sin, which Scripture calleth a soft heart. And then for the passionate part, which consisteth in lively feelings of sin, misery, mercy, &c. and in weeping for sin I shall say but

this : 1. Many an unsanctified person hath very much of it, which yet are desperately hardhearted sinners. It dependeth far more on the temper of the body, than of the grace in the soul. Women usually can weep easily (and yet not all,) and children, and old men. Some complexions incline to it, and others not. Many can weep at a passion-sermon, or any moving duty, and yet will not be persuaded to obedience ; these are hardhearted sinners for all their tears. 2. Many a tender, godly person cannot weep for sin, partly through the temper of their minds, which are more judicious and solid, and less passionate ; but mostly from the temper of their bodies, which dispose them not that way. 3. Deepest sorrows seldom cause tears, but deep thoughts of heart ; as greatest joys seldom cause laughter, but inward pleasure. I will tell you how you shall know whose heart is truly sorrowful for sin, and tender ; he that would be at the greatest cost or pains to be rid of sin, or that he had not sinned. You cannot weep for sin, but you would give all that you have to be rid of sin ; you could wish when you dishonored God by sin, that you had spent that time in suffering rather ; and if it were to do again on the same terms and inducements, you would not do it ; nay, you would live a beggar contentedly, so you might fully please God, and never sin against him ; and are content to pinch your flesh, and deny your worldly interest for the time to come, rather than wilfully disobey. This is a truly tender heart. On the other side, another can weep to think of his sin ; and yet if you should ask him, What wouldst thou give, or what wouldst thou suffer, so thou hadst not sinned, or that thou mightest sin no more ? Alas, very little. For the next time that he is put to it, he will rather venture on the sin, than venture on a little loss, or danger, or disgrace in the world, or deny his craving flesh its pleasures. This is a hardhearted sinner. The more you would part with to be rid of sin, or the greatest cost you would be at for that end, the more repentance have you, and true tenderness of heart. Alas, if men should go to heaven according to their weeping, what abundance of children and women would be there for one man ! I will speak truly my own case. This doubt lay heavy many a year on my own soul, when yet I would have given all that I had to be rid of sin, but I could not weep a

tear for it. Nor could I weep for the death of my dearest friends, when yet I would have bought their lives, had it been God's will, at a dearer rate than many that could weep for them ten times as much. And now since my nature is decayed, and my body languished in consuming weakness, and my head more moistened, and my veins filled with phlegmatic, watery blood, now I can weep; and I find never the more tenderheartedness in myself than before. And yet to this day so much remains of my old disposition, that I could wring all the money out of my purse, easier than one tear out of my eyes, to save a friend, or rescue them from evil: when I see divers that can weep for a dead friend, that would have been at no great cost to save their lives. 5. Besides, as Dr. Sibbs saith, "There is oft sorrow for sin in us, when it doth not appear; it wanteth but some quickening word to set it a foot." It is the nature of grief to break out into tears most, when sorrow hath some vent, either when we use some expostulating, aggravating terms with ourselves, or when we are opening our hearts and case to a friend; then sorrow will often shew itself that did not before. 6. Yet do I not deny, but that our want of tears, and tender affections, and heartmeltings, are our sins. For my part, I see exceeding cause to bewail it greatly in myself, that my soul is not raised to a higher pitch of tender sensibility of all spiritual things than it is. I doubt not but it should be the matter of our daily confession and complaint to God, that our hearts are so dull and little affected with his sacred truths, and our own sins. But this is the scope of all my speech, Why do not you distinguish between matter of sorrow, and matter of doubting? No question but you should lament your dulness and stupidity, and use all God's means for the quickening of your affections, and to get the most lively frame of soul; but must it cause you to doubt of your sincerity, when you cannot obtain this? Then will you never have a settled peace or assurance for many days together, for aught I know. I would ask you but this, whether you are willing or unwilling of all that hardness, insensibleness, and dulness which you complain of? If you are willing of it, what makes you complain of it? If you are unwilling, it seems your will is so far sound; and it is the will that is the seat of the life of grace, which we must try by. And

was not Paul's case the same with yours, when he saith, "The good which I would do, I do not; and when I would do good, evil is present with me;" Rom. vii. 19. I know Paul speaks not of gross sins, but ordinary infirmities. And I have told you before, that the liveliness and sensibility of the passions or affections, is a thing that the will, though sanctified, cannot fully command or excite at its pleasure. A sanctified man cannot grieve or weep for sin when he will, or so much as he will. He cannot love, joy, be zealous, &c. when he will. He may be truly willing, and not able. And is not this your case? And doth not Paul make it the case of all Christians? "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other, so that we cannot do the things that we would;" Gal. v. 17. Take my counsel therefore in this, if you love not self-deceiving and disquietness. Search whether you can say unfeignedly, 'I would with all my heart have Christ and his quickening and sanctifying Spirit, and his softening grace, to bring my hard heart to tenderness, and my dull and blockish soul to a lively frame! O that I could attain it?' And if you can truly say thus, Bless God that hath given you saving sincerity; and then let all the rest of your dulness, and deadness, and hardheartedness be matter of daily sorrow to you, and spare not, so it be in moderation, but let it be no matter of doubting. Confess it, complain of it, pray against it, and strive against it; but do not deny God's grace in you for it.

And here let me mind you of one thing, That it is a very ill distemper of spirit, when a man can mourn for nothing, but what causeth him to doubt of his salvation. It is a great corruption, if when your doubts are resolved, and you are persuaded of your salvation, if then you cease all your humiliation and sorrow for your sin; for you must sorrow that you have in you such a body of death, and that which is so displeasing to God, and are able to please and enjoy him no more, though you were never so certain of the pardon of sin, and of salvation.

7. Lastly, Let me ask you one question more; What is the reason that you are so troubled for want of tears for your sin? Take heed lest there lie some corruption in this trouble that you do not discern. If it be only because your deadness and dullness

is your sin, and you would fain have your soul in that frame, in which it may be fittest to please God and enjoy him ; then I commend and encourage you in your trouble. But take heed lest you should have any conceit of meritoriousness in your tears ; for that would be a more dangerous sin than your want of tears. And if it be for want of a sign of grace, and because a dry eye is a sign of an unregenerate soul, I have told you, it is not so, except where it only seconds an impenitent heart, and comes from, or accompanieth an unrenewed will, and a prevailing unwillingness to turn to God by Christ. Shew me, if you can, where the Scripture saith, He that cannot weep for sin, shall not be saved, or hath no true grace. Is not your complaint in this, the very same that the most eminent Christians have used in all times? That most blessed, holy man, Mr. Bradford, who sacrificed his life in the flames against Romish abominations, was wont to subscribe his spiritual letters (indited by the breath of the Spirit of God) thus : ‘ The most miserable, hardhearted sinner, John Bradford.’

Doubt 5. ‘ O but I am not willing to good, and therefore I fear that even my will itself is yet unchanged : I have such a backwardness and undisposedness to duty, especially secret prayer, meditation, and self-examination, and reproving and exhorting sinners, that I am fain to force myself to it against my will. It is no delight that I find in these duties that brings me to them, but only I use violence with myself, and am fain to pull myself down on my knees, because I know it is a duty, and I cannot be saved without it ; but I am no sooner on my knees, but I have a motion to rise, or be short, and am weary of it, and find no great miss of duty when I do omit it.

Answer. 1. This shews that your soul is sick, when your meat goes so much against your stomach that you are fain to force it down : and sickness may well cause you to complain to God and man. But what is this to deadness ! The dead cannot force down their meat, nor digest it at all. It seems by this, that you are sanctified but in a low degree, and your corruption remains in some strength ; and let that be your sorrow, and the overcoming of it be your greatest care and business : but should you therefore say that you are unsanctified ? It seems that you have still the flesh lusting against

the Spirit, that you cannot do the good you would. When you would pray with delight and unweariedness, the flesh draws back, and the devil is hindering you. And is it not so in too great a measure with the best on earth? Remember what Christ said to his own apostles. When they should have done him one of their last services, as to the attendance of his body on earth, and should have comforted him in his agony, they are all asleep. Again and again he comes to them, and findeth them asleep: Christ is praying and sweating blood, and they are still sleeping, though he warned them to watch and pray, that they enter not into temptation. But what doth God say to them for it? Why he useth this same distinction between humiliation for sin, and doubting of sincerity and salvation, and he helps them to the former, and helps them against the latter. "Could ye not watch with me one hour?" saith he. There he convinceth them of the sin, that they may be humbled for it. "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak," saith he. There he utterly resisteth their doubtings, or preventeth them; shewing them wherein sincere grace consisteth, even in the Spirit's willingness; and telling them that they had that grace; and then telling them whence came their sin, even from the weakness of the flesh.

2. I have shewed you that as every man's will is but partly sanctified (as to the degree of holiness) and so far as it is imperfect, it will be unwilling; so that there is something in the duties of secret prayer, meditation and reproof, which makes most men more backward to them than other duties. The last doth so cross our fleshly interests; and the two former are so spiritual, and require so pure and spiritual a soul, and set a man so immediately before the living God, as if we were speaking to him face to face, and have nothing of external pomp to draw us, that it is no wonder, if while there is flesh within us, we are backward to them! Especially while we are so unacquainted with God, and while strangeness and consciousness of sin doth make us draw back: besides that, the devil will more busily hinder us here than anywhere.

3. The question, therefore, is not, Whether you have an unwillingness and backwardness to good: for so have all. Nor yet, Whether you have any cold ineffectual wishes: for so have the ungodly. But, Whether your willingness be not more than your un-

willingness : and in that, 1. It must not be in every single act of duty ; for a godly man may be actually more unwilling to a duty at this particular time, than willing, and thereupon may omit it : but it must be about your habitual willingness, manifested in ordinary, actual willingness. 2. You must not exclude any of those motives which God hath given you to make you willing to duty. He hath commanded it, and his authority should move you. He hath threatened you, and therefore fear should move you ; or else he would never have threatened. He hath made promises of reward, and therefore the hope of that should move you. And therefore you may perceive here, what a dangerous mistake it is to think that we have no grace, except our willingness to duty be without God's motives, form a mere love to the duty itself, or to its effect. Nay, it is a dangerous Antinomian mistake to imagine, that it is our duty to be willing to good, without these motives of God ; I say, To take it so much as for our duty, to exclude God's motives, though we should not judge of our grace by it. For it is but an accusation of Christ (and his law) who hath ordained these motives of punishment and reward, to be his instruments to move the soul to duty. Let me therefore put the right question to you, Whether all God's motives laid together and considered, the ordinary prevailing part of your will, be not rather for duty than against it ? This you will know by your practice. For if the prevailing part be against duty, you will not do it ; if it be for duty, you will ordinarily perform it, though you cannot do it so well as you would. And then you may see that your backwardness and remaining unwillingness must still be matter of humiliation and resistance to you, but not matter of doubting. Nay, thank God that enableth you to pull down yourself on your knees when you are unwilling ; for what is that but the prevailing of your willingness against your unwillingness ? Should your unwillingness once prevail, you would turn your back upon the most acknowledged duties.

Doubt 6. 'But I am afraid that it is only slavish fear of hell, and not the love of God, that causeth me to obey ; and if it were not for this fear, I doubt whether I should not quite give over all. And perfect love casteth out fear.'

Ans. I have answered this already. Love will not be perfect

in this life. In the life to come it will cast out all fear of damnation ; and all fear that drives the soul from God, and all fear of men, (which is meant in Rev. xxi. 8. where the fearful and unbelievers are condemned ; that is, those that fear men more than God.) And that 1 John iv. 17, 18. speaketh of a tormenting fear, which is it that I am persuading you from, and consisteth in terrors of soul, upon an apprehension that God will condemn you. But it speaketh not of a filial fear, nor of a fear lest we should by forsaking God, or by yielding to temptation, lose the crown of life, and so perish ; as long as this is not a tormenting fear, but a cautious, preserving, preventing fear. Besides the text plainly saith, “ It is that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that love casteth out this fear ;” and at the day of judgment, love will have more fully overcome it. It is a great mistake to think that filial fear is only the fear of temporal chastisement, and that all fear of hell is slavish. Even filial fear is a fear of hell ; but with this difference. A son (if he know himself to be a son) hath such a persuasion of his father’s love to him, that he knows he will not cast him off, except he should be so vile as to renounce his father ; which he is moderately fearful or careful, lest by temptation he should be drawn to do, but not distrustfully fearful, as knowing the helps and mercies of his father. But a slavish fear, is, when a man having no apprehensions of God’s love, or willingness to shew *him* mercy, doth look that God should deal with him as a slave, and destroy him whenever he doth amiss. It is this slavish tormenting fear which I spend all this writing against. But yet a great deal, even of this slavish fear, may be in those sons, that knew not themselves to be sons.

But suppose you were out of all fear of damnation ; do not belie your own heart, and tell me, Had you not rather be holy than unholy ; pleasing to God than displeasing ? And would not the hope of salvation draw you from sin to duty, without the fear of damnation in hell ? But you will say, ‘ That is still mercenary, and as bad as slavish fears.’ I answer, ‘ Not so, this hope of salvation is the hope of enjoying God, and living in perfect pleasingness to him, and pleasure in him in glory ; and the desire of this is a desire of

love : it is love to God that makes you desire him, and hope to enjoy him.

Lastly, I say again take heed of separating what God hath joined. If God, by putting in your nature the several passions of hope, fear, love, &c. and by putting a holiness into these passions, by sanctifying grace, and by putting both promises and dreadful threatenings into his word : I say, if God by all these means hath given you several motives to obedience, take heed of separating them. Do not once ask your heart such a question, 'Whether it would obey if there were no threatening, and so no fear ?' Nor on the other side, do not let fear do all, without love. Doubtless, the more love constraineth to duty, the better it is ; and you should endeavor with all your might that you might feel more of the force of love in your duties : but do you not mark how you cherish that corruption that you complain of ? Your doubts and tormenting fears are the things that love should cast out. Why then do you entertain them ? If you say, 'I cannot help it :' why then do you cherish them, and own them, and plead and dispute for them ? and say you do well to doubt, and you have cause ? Will this ever cast out tormenting fears ? Do you not know that the way to cast them out, is, not to maintain them by distrustful thoughts or words ; but to see their sinfulness, and abhor them, and to get more high thoughts of the lovingkindness of God, and the tender mercies of the Redeemer, and the unspeakable love that he hath manifested in his suffering for you, and so the love of God may be more advanced and powerful in your soul, and may be able to cast out your tormenting fears. Why do you not do this instead of doubting ? If tormenting fears and doubtings be a sin, why do you not make conscience of them, and bewail it that you have been so guilty of them ? Will you therefore doubt because you have slavish fears ? Why that is to doubt because you doubt ; and to fear because you fear ; and so to sin still because you have sinned. Consider well of the folly of this course.

Doubt 7. 'But I am not able to believe ; and without faith there is no pleasing God, nor hope of salvation ; I fear unbelief will be my ruin.'

Ans. 1. I have answered this doubt fully before. It is ground-
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ed on a mistake of the nature of true faith. You think that faith is the believing that you are in God's favor, and that you are justified ; but properly this is no faith at all, but only assurance, which is sometimes a fruit of faith, and sometimes never in this life obtained by a believer. Faith consisteth of two parts. 1. Assent to the truth of the Word. 2. Acceptance of Christ as he is offered, which immediately produceth a trusting on Christ for salvation, and consent to be governed by him, and resolution to obey him ; which in the fullest sense are also acts of faith. Now do you not believe the truth of the Gospel ? And do you not accept of Christ as he is offered therein ? If you are truly willing to have Christ as he is offered, I dare say you are a true believer. If you be not willing, for shame never complain. Men use rather to speak against those that they are unwilling of, than complain of their absence, and that they cannot enjoy them.

3. However, seeing you complain of unbelief, in the name of God do not cherish it, and plead for it, and by your own cogitations fetch in daily matter to feed it ; but do more in detestation of it, as well as complain.

Doubt 8. ' But I am a stranger to the witness of the Spirit, and the joy of the Holy Ghost, and communion with God, and therefore how can I be a true believer ?'

Ans. 1. Feeding your doubts and perplexities, and arguing for them, is not a means to get the testimony and joy of the Spirit, but rather studying with all saints to know the love of God which passeth knowledge, to comprehend the height, and breadth, and length, and depth of his love ; and seeking to understand the things that are given you of God. Acknowledge God's general love to mankind, both in his gracious nature, and common providences, and redemption by Christ, and deny not his special mercies to yourself, but dwell in the study of the riches of grace, and that is the way to come to the joy of the Holy Ghost. 2. I have told you before what the witness of the Spirit is, and what is the ordinary mistake herein. If you have the graces and holy operations of the Spirit, you have the witness of the Spirit, whether you know it or not. 3. If by your own doubtings you have deprived yourself of the joy of the Holy Ghost, bewail it, and do so no more ; but do

not therefore say you have not the Holy Ghost. For the Holy Ghost often works regeneration and holiness before he works any sensible joys. 4. You have some hope of salvation by Christ left in you : you are not yet in utter despair ; and is it no comfort to you to think that you have yet any hope, and are not quite past all remedy ? It may be your sorrows may so cloud it that you take no notice of it ; but I know you cannot have the least hope without some answerable comfort. And may not that comfort be truly the joy of the Holy Ghost ? 5. And for communion with God let me ask you ; Have you no recourse to him by prayer in your straits ? Do you not wait at his mouth for the law and direction of your life ? Have you received no holy desires, or other graces from him ? Nay, are you sure that you are not a member of Christ, who is one with him ? How can you then say you have no communion with him ? Can there be communication of prayer and obedience from you ; yea, your own self delivered up to Christ ; and a communication of any life of grace from God, by Christ and the spirit ; and all this without communion ? It cannot be. Many a soul hath most near communion with Christ that knows it not.

Doubt 9. 'I have not the spirit of prayer : when I should pour out my soul to God, I have neither bold access, nor matter of prayer, nor words.'

Ans. Do you know what the spirit of prayer is ? It containeth, 1. Desires of the soul after the things we want, especially Christ and his graces. 2. An addressing ourselves to God with these desires, that we may have help and relief from him. Have not you both these ? Do you not desire Christ and grace, justification and sanctification ? Do you not look to God as him who alone is able to supply your wants, and bids you ask that you may receive ? Do you utterly despair of help, and so seek to none ? Or do you make your addresses by prayer to any but God ? But perhaps you look at words and matter to dilate upon, that you may be able to hold out in a long speech to God, and you think that it is the effect of the spirit of prayer. But where do you find that in God's word ? I confess that in many, and most, the Spirit which helpeth to desires, doth also help to some kind of expressions ; because if

a man be of able natural parts, and have a tongue to express his own mind, the promoting of holy desires will help men to expressions. For a full soul is hardly hindered from venting itself: and experience teacheth us, that the Spirit's inflaming the heart with holy affections, doth very much furnish both the invention and expression. But this is but accidental and uncertain; for those that are either men of unready tongues, or that are so ill bred among the rude vulgar, that they want fit expressions of their own minds, or that are of over-bashful dispositions, or especially that are of small knowledge, and of little and short acquaintance with those that should teach them to pray by their example, or that have been but of short standing in the school of Christ,—such a man may have the spirit of prayer many a year, and never be able, in full expressions of his own, to make known his wants to God; no, nor in good and tolerable sense and language, before others to speak to God, from his own invention. A man may know all those articles of the faith that are of flat necessity to salvation, and yet not be able to find matter or words for the opening of his heart to God at length. I would advise such to frequent the company of those that can teach and help them in prayer, and neglect not to use the smallest parts they have, especially in secret, between God and their own souls, where they need not, so much as in public, to be regardful of expressions; and in the mean time to learn a prayer from some book, that may most fitly express their necessities; or to use the book itself in prayer, if they distrust their memories, not resolving to stick here, and make it a means of indulging their laziness and negligence, much less to reproach and deride those that express their desires to God from the present sense of their own wants (as some wickedly do deride such;) but to use this lawful help till they are able to do better without it than with it, and then to lay it by, and not before. The Holy Ghost is said (Rom. viii. 16.) to help our infirmities in prayer; but how? 1. By teaching us what to pray for; not always what matter or words to enlarge ourselves by; but what necessary graces to pray for. 2. By giving us sighs and groans inexpressible, which is far from giving copious expressions; for groans and sighs be not words, and if they be groans that we cannot express, it would rather seem to intimate a want of expression,

than a constant abounding therein, where the Spirit doth assist ; though indeed the meaning is, that the groans are so deep, that they are past the expression of our words : all our speech cannot express that deep sense that is in our hearts. For the understanding hath the advantage of the affections herein ; all the thoughts of the mind may be expressed to others, but the feelings and fervent passions of the soul can be but very defectively expressed.

Lastly, All have not the spirit of prayer in like measure ; nor all that have it in a great measure at one time, can find it so at pleasure. Desires rise and fall, and these earnest groans be not in every prayer where the Holy Ghost doth assist. I believe there is never a prayer that ever a believer did put up to God for things lawful and useful, but it was put up by the help of the Spirit. For the weakest prayer hath some degree of good desire in it, and addresses to God with an endeavor to express them ; and these can come from none but only from the Spirit. Mere words without desires, are no more prayer, than a suit of apparel hanged on a stake, is a man. You may have the spirit of prayer, and yet have it in a very weak degree.

Yet still I would encourage you to bewail your defect herein as your sin, and seek earnestly the supply of your wants ; but what is that to the questioning or denying your sincerity, or right to salvation?

Doubt 10. ‘I have no gifts to make me useful to myself or others. When I should profit by the word I cannot remember it : when I should reprove a sinner, or instruct the ignorant, I have not words : if I were called to give an account of my faith, I have not words to express that which is in my mind : and what grace can here be then?’

Ans. This needs no long answer. Lament and amend those sins by which you have been disabled. But know, that these gifts depend more on nature, art, industry and common grace, than upon special saving grace. Many a bad man is excellent in all these, and many a one that is truly godly is defective. Where hath God laid our salvation upon the strength of our memories, the readiness of our tongues, or measure of the like gifts? That were almost as if he should have made a law, that all shall be saved that

have sound complexions, and healthful and youthful bodies; and all be damned that are sickly, aged, weak, children, and most women.

Doubt. 11. 'O but I have been a grievous sinner, before I came home, and have fallen foully since, and I am utterly unworthy of mercy! Will the Lord ever save such an unworthy wretch as I? Will he ever give his mercy and the blood of his Son, to one that hath so abused it?'

Answer. 1. The question is not, with God, what you have been, but what you are? God takes men as they then are, and not as they were. 2. It is a dangerous thing to object the greatness of your guilt against God's mercy and Christ's merits. Do you think Christ's satisfaction is not sufficient? Or that he died for small sins and not for great? Do you not know that he hath made satisfaction for all, and will pardon all, and hath given out the pardon of all in his covenant, and that to all men, on condition they will accept Christ to pardon and heal them in his own way? Hath God made it his great design in the work of man's redemption, to make his love and mercy as honorable and wonderful, as he did his power in the work of creation? And will you after all this, oppose the greatness of your sins against the greatness of this mercy and satisfaction? Why, you may as well think yourself to be such a one, that God could not or did not make you, as to think your sins so great, that Christ could not or did not satisfy for them, or will not pardon them, if you repent and believe in him. 3. And for worthiness, I pray you observe; there is a two-fold worthiness and righteousness. There is a legal worthiness and righteousness, which consisteth in a perfect obedience, which is the performance of the conditions of the law of pure nature and works. This no man hath but Christ; and if you look after this righteousness or worthiness in yourself, then do you depart from Christ, and make him to have died and satisfied in vain: you are a Jew and not a Christian, and are one of those that Paul so much disputeth against, that would be justified by the law. Nay, you must not so much as once imagine that all your own works can be any part of this legal righteousness or worthiness to you. Only Christ's satisfaction and merit is instead of this our legal righteousness and worthiness.

God never gave Christ and mercy to any but the unworthy in this sense. If you know not yourself to be unworthy and unrighteous in the sense of the law of works, you cannot know what Christ's righteousness is. Did Christ come to save any but sinners, and such as were lost? What need you a Savior, if you were not condemned? And how come you to be condemned, if you were not unrighteous and unworthy? But then, 2. There is an evangelical personal worthiness and righteousness, which is the condition on which God bestows Christ's righteousness upon us; and this all have that will be saved by Christ. But what is that? Why, it hath two parts: i. The condition and worthiness required to your union with Christ, and pardon of all your sins past, and your adoption and justification; it is no more but your hearty and thankful acceptance of the gift that is freely given you of God by his covenant grant; that is, Christ and life in him; 1 John v. 10—12. There is no worthiness required in you before faith, as a condition on which God will give you faith; but only certain means you are appointed to use for the obtaining it: and faith itself is but the acceptance of a free gift. God requireth you not to bring any other worthiness or price in your hands, but that you consent unfeignedly to have Christ as he is offered, and to the ends and uses that he is offered; that is, as one that hath satisfied for you by his blood and merits, to put away your sins, and as one that must illuminate and teach you, sanctify, and guide, and govern you by his word and Spirit; and as King and Judge will fully and finally justify you at the day of judgment, and give you the crown of glory. Christ on his part, 1. Hath merited your pardon by his satisfaction, and not properly by his sanctifying you. 2. And sanctifieth you by his Spirit, and ruleth you by his laws, and not directly by his bloodshed. 3. And he will justify you at judgment as King and Judge, and not as Satisfier or Sanctifier. But the condition on your part, of obtaining interest in Christ and his benefits, is that one faith which accepteth him in all these respects (both as King, Priest and Teacher) and to all these ends conjunctly. But then, ii. The condition and worthiness required to the continuation and consummation of your pardon, justification, and right to glory, is both the continuance of your faith, and your sincere

obedience, even your keeping the baptismal covenant that you made with Christ by your parents, and the covenant which you in your own person made with him in your first true believing. These indeed are called Worthiness and Righteousness frequently in the Gospel. But it is no worthiness consisting in any such works, which make the reward to be of debt, and not of grace (of which Paul speaks) but only in faith, and such Gospel-works as James speaks of, which make the reward to be wholly of grace and not debt.

Now if you say you are unworthy in this evangelical sense, then you must mean (if you know what you say,) that you are an infidel or unbeliever, or an impenitent, obstinate rebel, that would not have Christ to reign over him; for the Gospel calleth none unworthy, (as non-performers of its conditions,) but only these. But I hope you dare not charge yourself with such infidelity and wilful rebellion.

Doubt 12. 'Though God hath kept me from gross sins, yet I find such searedness of conscience, and so little averseness from sin in my mind, that I fear I should commit it if I lay under temptations; and also that I should not hold out in trial if I were called to suffer death, or any grievous calamity. And that obedience which endureth merely for want of a temptation, is no true obedience.'

Answ. 1. I have fully answered this before. If you can overcome the temptations of prosperity, you have no cause to doubt distrustfully, whether you shall overcome the temptation of adversity. And if God give you grace to avoid temptations to sin, and flee occasions as much as you can, and to overcome them where you cannot avoid them; you have little reason to distrust his preservation of you, and your steadfastness thereby, if you should be cast upon greater temptations. Indeed if you feel not such a belief of the evil and danger of sinning, as to possess you with some sensible hatred of it, you have need to look to your heart for the strengthening of that belief and hatred; and fear your heart with a godly, preserving jealousy, but not with tormenting, disquieting doubts. Whatever your passionate hatred be, if you have a settled, well-grounded resolution, to walk in obedience to the death, you may confidently and comfortably trust him for your preservation, who gave you those resolutions.

2. And the last sentence of this doubt had need of great caution, before you conclude it a certain truth. It is true that the obedience, which by an ordinary temptation, such as men may expect, would be overthrown, is not well grounded and rooted before it is overthrown. But it is a great doubt whether there be not degrees of temptation possible, which would overcome the resolution and grace of the most holy, having such assistance as the Spirit usually giveth believers in temptation? and whether some temptations which overcome not a strong Christian, would not overcome a weak one, who yet hath true grace? I conclude nothing of these doubts. But I would not have you trouble yourself upon confident conclusions, on so doubtful grounds. This I am certain of, 1. That the strongest Christian should take heed of temptation, and not trust to the strength of his graces, nor presume on God's preservation, while he wilfully casteth himself in the mouth of dangers; nor to be encouraged hereunto upon any persuasion of an impossibility of his falling away. O the falls, the fearful falls that I have known (alas, how often!) the most eminent men for godliness that ever I knew, to be guilty of, by casting themselves upon temptations. I confess I will never be confident of that man's perseverance, were he the best that I know on earth, who casteth himself upon violent temptations, especially the temptations of sensuality, prosperity, and seducement. 2. I know God hath taught us daily to watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation, and to pray, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." (I never understood the necessity of that petition feelingly, till I saw the examples of these seven or eight years last past.) This being so, you must look that your perseverance should be by being preserved from temptation; and must rather examine, whether you have that grace which will enable you to avoid temptations, than whether you have grace enough to overcome them, if you rush into them. But if God unavoidably cast you upon them, keep up your watch and prayer, and you have no cause to trouble yourself with distrustful fears.

Doubt 13. 'I am afraid, lest I have committed the unpardonable sin against the Holy Ghost, and then there is no hope of my salvation.'

Ans. It seems you know not what the sin against the Holy Ghost is. It is this, When a man is convinced that Christ and his disciples did really work those glorious miracles which are recorded in the Gospel, and yet will not believe that Christ is the Son of God, and his doctrine true, though sealed with all those miracles, and other holy and wonderful works of the Spirit, but doth blasphemously maintain that they were done by the power of the devil. This is the sin against the Holy Ghost. And dare you say that you are guilty of this? If you be, then you do not believe that Christ is the Son of God, and the Messiah, and his Gospel true. And then you will sure oppose him, and maintain that he was a deceiver, and that the devil was the author of all the miraculous and glorious workings of his Spirit. Then you will never fear his displeasure, nor call him seriously either Lord or Savior! nor tender him any service, any more than you do to Mahomet. None but infidels do commit the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; nor but few of them. Unbelief is eminently called "sin" in the Gospel; and that "unbelief" which is maintained by blaspheming the glorious works of the Holy Ghost, which Christ and his disciples through many years time did perform for a testimony to his truth, that is called singularly, "The sin against the Holy Ghost!" You may meet with other descriptions of this sin, which may occasion your terror; but I am fully persuaded that this is the plain truth.

Doubt 14. 'But I greatly fear lest the time of grace be past, and lest I have out-sat the day of mercy, and now mercy hath wholly forsaken me. For I have oft heard ministers tell me from the word, "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of your visitation; to-day, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts, lest God swear in his wrath, that they shall not enter into his rest." But I have stood out long after, I have resisted and quenched the Spirit, and now it is I fear departed from me.'

Ans. Here is sufficient matter for humiliation, but the doubting ariseth merely from ignorance. The day of grace may in two respects be said to be over: The first (and most properly so called) is, When God will not accept of a sinner, though he should repent and return. This is never in this life for certain. And he that imagineth any such thing as that it is too late, while his soul is in

his body, to repent and accept of Christ and mercy, is merely ignorant of the tenor and sense of the Gospel ! For the new law of grace doth limit no time on earth for God's accepting of a returning sinner. True faith and repentance do as surely save at the last hour of the day, as at the first. God hath said, that whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life. He hath no where excepted late believers or repenters. Shew any such exception if you can.

The second sense in which it may be said that the day of grace is over, is this : When a man hath so long resisted the Spirit, that God hath given him over to the wilful, obstinate refusals of mercy, and of Christ's government, resolving that he will never give him the prevailing grace of his Spirit. Where note, 1. That this same man might still have grace as soon as any other, if he were but willing to accept Christ and grace in him. 2. That no man can know of himself or any other, that God hath thus finally forsaken him ; for God hath given us no sign to know it by (at least who sin not against the Holy Ghost.) God hath not told us his secret intents concerning such. 3. Yet some men have far greater cause to fear it than others ; especially those men, who under the most searching, lively sermons, do continue secure and wilful in known wickedness either hating godliness and godly persons, and all that do reprove them, or at least being stupified, that they feel no more than a post, the force of God's terrors, or the sweetness of his promises ; but make a jest of sinning, and think the life of godliness a needless thing. Especially if they grow old in this course, I confess such have great cause to fear, lest they are quite forsaken of God ; for very few such are ever recovered. 4. And therefore it may well be said to all men, " To day if you will hear his voice harden not your hearts," &c. And " This is the acceptable time ; this is the day of salvation ;" both as this life is called, " the day of salvation ;" and because no man is certain to live another day, that he may repent ; nor yet to have grace to repent if he live. 5. But what is all this to you that do repent ? Can you have cause to fear that your day of grace is over, that have received grace ? Why, that is as foolish a thing, as if a man should come to the market and buy corn, and when he hath done, go

home lamenting that the market was past before he came. Or as a man should come and hear a sermon, and when he hath done, lament that the sermon was done before he came. If your day of grace be past, tell me (and do not wrong God,) Where had you the grace of repentance? How came you by that grace of holy desires? Who made you willing to have Christ for your Lord and Saviour? So that you had rather have him, and God's favor, and a holy heart and life, than all the glory of the world? How came you to desire that you were such a one as God would have you to be? And to desire that all your sins were dead, and might never live in you more? And that you were able to love God, and delight in him, and please him even in perfection? And that you are so troubled that you cannot do it? Are these signs that your day of grace is over? Doth God's Spirit breathe out groans after Christ and grace within you? And yet is the day of grace over? Nay, what if you had no grace? Do you not hear God daily offering you Christ and grace? Doth he not entreat and beseech you to be reconciled unto him? (2 Cor. v. 19, 20.) And would he not compel you to come in? (Matt. xxii.) Do you not feel some uneasiness in your sinful condition? And some motions and strivings at your heart to get out of it? Certainly (though you should be one that hath yet no grace to salvation,) yet these continued offers of grace, and the strivings of the Spirit of Christ with your heart, do shew that God hath not quite forsaken you, and that your day of grace and visitation is not past.

Doubt 15. 'But I have sinned since my profession, and that even against my knowledge and conscience. I have had temptations to sin, and I have considered of the evil and danger, and yet in the most sober deliberations, I have resolved to sin. And how can such a one have any true grace, or be saved?'

Ans. 1. If you had not true grace, God is still offering it, and ready to work it.

2. Where do you find in Scripture, that none who have true grace do sin knowingly or deliberately. Perhaps you will say in Heb. x. 24. "If we sin wilfully, after the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin, but a fearful looking for of judgment, and fire, which shall devour the adversaries." *Ans.*

But you must know, that it is not every wilful sin which is there mentioned ; but, as even now I told you, unbelief is peculiarly called sin in the New Testament. And the true meaning of the text is, If we utterly renounce Christ by infidelity, as not being the true Messiah, after we have known his truth, then, &c. Indeed none sin more against knowledge than the godly when they do sin ; for they know more, for the most part, than others do. And passion and sensuality (the remnant of it which yet remaineth) will be working strongly in your very deliberations against sin, and either perverting the judgment to doubt whether it be a sin, or whether there be any such danger in it ; or whether it be not a very little sin ; or else blinding it, that it cannot see the arguments against the sin in their full vigor ; or at least, prepossessing the heart and delight, and so hindering our reasons against sin from going down to the heart, and working on the will, and so from commanding the actions of the body. This may befall a godly man. And moreover God may withdraw his grace as he did from Peter and David in their sin. And then our considerations will work but faintly, and sensuality and sinful passion will work effectually. It is scarce possible, I think, that such a man as David could be so long about so horrid a sin, and after contrive the murder of Uriah, and all this without deliberation, or any reasoning in himself to the contrary.

3. The truth is, though this be no good cause for any repenting sinner to doubt of salvation, yet it is a very grievous aggravation of sin, to commit it against knowledge and conscience, and upon consideration. And therefore I advise all that love their peace or salvation, to take heed of it. For as they will find that no sin doth more deeply wound the conscience, and plunge the sinner into fearful perplexities ; which oftentimes hang on him very long, so the oftener such sin is committed, the less evidence will such a one have of the sincerity of their faith and obedience ; and therefore in the name of God, beware. And let the troubled soul make this the matter of his moderate humiliation, and spare not. Bewail it before God. Take shame to yourself, and freely confess it, when you are called to it before men. Favor it not, and deal not gently with it, if you would have peace ; but we give glory to God, by taking the just dishonor to yourselves. Tender dealing is an ill

sign, and hath sad effects. But yet for every sin against knowledge, to doubt of the truth of grace, is not right, much less to doubt of the pardon of that sin when we truly repent of it. Are you unfeignedly sorry for your sins against conscience, and resolve against them for the future, through the help of God's grace? If so, then that sin is pardoned now, through the blood of Christ believed in, whether you had then grace or not.

Doubt 16. 'But I have such corruptions in my nature, that I cannot overcome. I have such a passionate nature, and such a vanity of mind, and such worldly desires, that though I pray and strive against them daily, yet do they prevail. And it is not striving without overcoming that will prove the truth of grace in any. Besides, I do not grow in grace as all God's people do.'

Answer. 1. Do you think sin is not overcome as long as it dwelleth in us, and daily troubleth us, and is working in us? Paul saith, "The evil that I would not do, that I do;" and, "We cannot do the things we would." And yet Paul was not overcome with these sins, nor had they dominion over him. You must consider of these sins as in the habit, or in the act. In the habit as they are in the passions they will be still strong; but as they are in the will they are weak and overcome. Had you not rather you were void of these passions than not, and that you might restrain them in the act? Are you not weary of them, and daily pray and strive against them? If so, it seems they have not your will. And for the actual passion (as I may call it) itself, you must distinguish between, 1. Those which the will hath full power of, and which it hath but partial power over. 2. And between the several degrees of the passion. 3. And between the inward passion and the outward expressions.

Some degree of anger and of lust will oft stir in the heart, whether we will or not. But I hope you restrain it in the degree; and much more from breaking out into practices of lust, or cursed speeches, or railings, backbitings, slanderings, or revenge. For these your will, if sanctified, hath power to command. Even the acts of our corruptions, as well as the habits, will stick by us in this life; but if it be in gross sins, or avoidable infirmities carelessly or wilfully continued, I can tell you a better way to assu-

ance and comfort than your complaints are. Instead of being afraid lest you cannot have your sin and [Christ together, do but more heartily oppose that sin, and deal roundly and conscionably against it, till you have overcome it, and then you may ease yourself of your complaints and troubles. If you say, ‘O but it is not so easily done. I cannot overcome it. I have prayed and strove against it long.’ I answer, But are you heartily willing to be rid of it? If you will, it will be no impossible matter to be rid of the outward expressions, and the high degree of the passion, though not of every degree. Try this course awhile, and then judge. 1. Plainly confess your guiltiness. 2. Never more excuse it, or plead for it, to any that blameth you. 3. Desire those that live and deal with you, to tell you roundly of it as soon as they discern it, and engage yourself to them to take it well, as a friendly action which yourself requested of them. 4. When you feel the passion begin to stir, enter into serious consideration of the sinfulness, or go and tell some friend of your frail inclination, and presently beg their help against it. If it be godly persons that you are angry with, instead of giving them ill words, presently as soon as you feel the fire kindle, say to them, ‘I have a very passionate nature, which already is kindled, I pray you reprehend me for it, and help me against it, and pray to God for my deliverance.’ Also go to God yourself, and complain to him of it, and beg his help. Lastly, be sure that you make not light of it, and see that you avoid the occasions as much as you can. If you are indeed willing to be rid of the sin, then do not call these directions too hard. But shew your willingness in ready practising them. And thus you may see that it is better to make your corruptions the matter of your humiliation and reformation, than of your torment.

And for the other part of the doubt that you grow not in grace, I answer : 1. The promises of growth are conditional, or else signify what God will usually do for his people : but it is certain that they be not absolute to all believers. For it is certain that all true Christians do not always grow ; nay, that many do too oft decline, and lose their first fervor of love, and fall into sin, and live more carelessly. Yea, it is certain that a true believer may die in such decays, or in a far lower state than formerly he hath been in. If I

thought this needed proof, I could easily prove it; but he that openeth his eyes may soon see enough proof in England. 2. Many Christians do much mistake themselves about the very nature of true grace; and then no wonder if they think that they thrive when they do not, and that they thrive not when they do. They think that more of the life and truth of grace doth lie in passionate feelings of sin, grace, duty, &c. in sensible zeal, grief, joy, &c. and do not know that the chief part lieth in the understanding's estimation, and will's firm choice and resolution. And then they think they decline in grace, because they cannot weep, or joy so sensibly as before. Let me assure you of this as truth: 1. Young people have usually more vigor of affections than old; because they have more vigor of body, and hot blood, and agile, active spirits; when the freezing, decayed bodies and spirits of old men must needs make an abatement of their fervor in all duties. 2. The like may be said of most that are weak and sickly in comparison of the strong and healthful. 3. All things affect men most deeply when they are new, and time weareth off the vigor of that affection. The first hearing of such a fight, or such a victory, or such a great man or friend dead, doth much affect us; but so it doth not still. When you first receive any benefit, it more delighteth you than long after. So married people, or any other, in the first change of their condition, are more affected with it than afterward. And indeed man's nature cannot hold up in a constant elevation of affections. Children are more taken with every thing that they see and hear than old men, because all is new to them, and all seems old to the other. 4. I have told you before that some natures are more fiery, passionate, and fervent than others are; and in such a little grace will cause a great deal of earnestness, zeal and passion. But let me tell you, that you may grow in these, and not grow in the body of your graces. Doubtless Satan himself may do so much to kindle your zeal, if he do but see it void of sound knowledge, as he did in James and John when they would have called for fire from heaven, but they knew not what spirit they were of. For the doleful case of Christ's churches in this age hath put quite beyond dispute that none do the devil's work more effectually, nor oppose the kingdom of Christ more

desperately, than they that have the hottest zeal with the weakest judgments. And as fire is most excellent and necessary in the chimney, but in the thatch it is worse than the vilest dung; so is zeal most excellent when guided by sound judgment; but more destructive than profane sensuality when it is let loose and misguided.

On the other side, you may decay much in feeling and fervor of affections, and yet grow in grace, if you do but grow in the understand and the will. And indeed this is the common growth which Christians have in their age. Examine therefore whether you have this or no. Do you not understand the things of the Spirit better than you formerly did? Do you not value God, Christ, glory, and grace at higher rates than formerly? Are you not more fully resolved to stick to Christ to the death than formerly you have been? I do not think but it would be a harder work for Satan to draw you from Christ to the flesh than heretofore. When the tree hath done growing in visible greatness, it groweth in rootedness. The fruit grows first in bulk and quantity, and then in mellow sweetness. Are not you less censorious, and more peaceable than heretofore? I tell you that is a more noble growth than a great deal of austere and bitter, youthful, censorious, dividing zeal of many will prove. Mark most aged, experienced Christians, that walk uprightly, and you will find that they quite outstrip the younger, 1. In experience, knowledge, prudence, and soundness of judgment. 2. In well-settled resolutions for Christ, his truth, and cause. 3. In a love of peace, especially in the church, and a hatred of dissensions, perverse contendings and divisions. If you can shew this growth, say not that you do not grow.

3. But suppose you do not grow, should you therefore deny the sincerity of your grace? I would not persuade any soul that they grow, when they do not. But if you do not, be humbled for it, and endeavor it for the future. Make it your desire and daily business, and spare not still. Lie not complaining, but rouse up your soul, and see what is amiss, and set upon neglected duties, and remove those corruptions that hinder your growth. converse with growing Christians, and under quickening means; endeavor the good of other men's souls as well as your own; and then you

will find that growth, which will silence this doubt, and do much more for you than that.

Doubt 17. 'I am troubled with such blasphemous thoughts and temptations to unbelief, even against God, and Christ, and Scripture, and the life to come, that I doubt I have no faith.'

Ans. To be tempted is no sign of gracelessness, but to yield to the temptation; not every yielding neither, but to be overcome of the temptation. Most melancholy people, especially that have any knowledge in religion, are frequently haunted with blasphemous temptations. I have oft wondered that the devil should have such a power and advantage in the predominancy of that distemper. Scarce one person of ten, whoever was with me in deep melancholy, either for the cure of body or mind, but hath been haunted with these blasphemous thoughts; and that so impetuously and violently set on and followed, that it might appear to be from the devil; yea, even many that never seemed godly, or to mind any such thing before. I confess it hath been a strengthening to my own faith, to see the devil such an enemy to the Christian faith; yea, to the Godhead itself.

But perhaps you will say, 'It is not mere temptation from Satan that I complain of; but it takes too much with my sinful heart. I am ready to doubt oftentimes whether there be a God, or whether his providence determine of the things here below; or whether Scripture be true, or the soul immortal,' &c.

Ans. This is a very great sin, and you ought to bewail and abhor it, and, in the name of God, make not light of it, but look to it betime. But yet let me tell you, that some degree of this blasphemy and infidelity may remain with the truest saving faith. The best may say, "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." But I will tell you my judgment. When your unbelief is such as to be a sign of a graceless soul in the state of damnation: if your doubtings of the truth of Scripture and the life to come, be so great that you will not let go the pleasures and profits of sin, and part with all, if God call you to it, in hope of that glory promised, and to escape the judgment threatened, because you look upon the things of the life to come but as uncertain things: then is your belief no saving belief; but your unbelief is prevalent. But if for all your

staggerings, you see so much probability of the truth of Scripture and the life to come, that you are resolved to venture (and part with, if called to it) all worldly hopes and happiness for the hope of that promised glory, and to make it the chiefest business of your life to attain it, and do deny yourself the pleasures of sin for that end ; this is a true saving faith, as is evident by its victory ; notwithstanding all the infidelity, atheism, and blasphemy that is mixed with it.

But again, let me advise you to take heed of this heinous sin, and bewail and detest the very least degree of it. It is dangerous when the devil strikes at the very root, and heart, and foundation of all your religion. There is more sinfulness and danger in this than in many other sins. And therefore let it never be motioned to your soul without abhorrence. Two ways the devil hath to move it. The one is by his immediate inward suggestions ; these are bad enough. The other is by his accursed instruments ; and this is a far more dangerous way ; whether it be by books, or by the words of men. And yet if it be by notorious wicked men, or fools, the temptation is the less ; but when it is by men of cunning wit, and smooth tongues, and hypocritical lives (for far be that wickedness from me, as to call them godly, or wise, or honest,) then it is the greatest snare the devil hath to lay. O just and dreadful God ! Did I think one day that those that I was then praying with, and rejoicing with, and that went up with me to the house of God in familiarity, would this day be blasphemers of thy sacred name, and deny the Lord that bought them, and deride thy holy word as a fable, and give up themselves to the present pleasures of sin, because they believe not thy promised glory ? O righteous and merciful God, that hast preserved the humble from this condemnation, and hast permitted only the proud and sensual professors to fall into it, and hast given them over to hellish conversations according to the nature of their hellish opinions, that they might be rather a terror to others than a snare ! I call their doctrine and practice hellish, from its original, because it comes from the father of lies, but not that there is any such opinion or practice in hell. He that tempts others to deny the godhead, the Christian faith, the Scripture, the life to come, doth no whit doubt of any one

of them himself, but believes and trembles. O fearful blindness of the professors of religion, that will hear, if not receive these blasphemies from the mouth of an apostate professor, which they would abhor if it came immediately from the devil himself. With what sad complaints and tremblings do poor sinners cry out (and not without cause,) ‘O I am haunted with such blasphemous temptations, that I am afraid lest God should suddenly destroy me, that ever such thoughts should come into my heart.’ But if an instrument of the devil come and plead against the Scripture or the life to come, or Christ himself, they will hear him with less detestation. The devil knows that familiarity will cause us to take that from a man, which we would abhor from the devil himself immediately. I intend not to give you now a particular preservation against each of these temptations. Only let me tell you, that this is the direct way to infidelity, apostacy, and the sin against the Holy Ghost; and if by any seducers the devil do overcome you herein, you are lost forever, and there will be no more sacrifice for your sin, but a fearful expectation of judgment, and that fire which shall devour the adversaries of Christ.

Doubt 18. ‘I have so great fear of death, and unwillingness to be with God, that I am afraid I have no grace: for if I had Paul’s spirit, I should be able to say with him, “I desire to depart and be with Christ,” whereas now, no news would be to me more unwelcome.’

Ans. There is a loathness to die that comes from a desire to do God more service; and another that comes from an apprehension of unreadiness, when we would fain have more assurance of salvation first; or would be fitter to meet our Lord. Blame not a man to be somewhat backward, that knows it must go with him for ever in heaven or hell, according as he is found at death. But these two be not so much a loathness to die, as a loathness to die now at this time. There is also in all men living, good and bad, a natural abhorrence and fear of death. God hath put this into men’s nature (even in innocency) to be his great means of governing the world. No man would live in order, or be kept in obedience, but for this. He that cares not for his own life, is master of another’s. Grace doth not root out this abhorrence of death, no

more than it unmanneth us ; only it restrains it from excess, and so far overcometh the violence of the passion, by the apprehensions of a better life beyond death, that a believer may the more quietly and willingly submit to it. Paul himself desireth not death, but the life which followeth it. “ He desireth to depart and be with Christ ;” that is, he had rather be in heaven than on earth, and therefore he is contented to submit to the penal sharp passage. God doth not command you to desire death itself, nor forbid you fearing it as an evil to nature, and a punishment of sin. Only he requireth you to desire the blessedness to be enjoyed after death, and that so earnestly as may make death itself the easier to you. Thank God, if the fear of death be somewhat abated in you, though it be not sweetened. Men may pretend what they please, but nature will abhor death as long as it is nature, and as long as man is man ; else temporal death had been no punishment to Adam, if his innocent nature had not abhorred it as it was an evil to it. Tell me but this, If death did not stand in your way to heaven, but that you could travel to heaven, as easily as to London, would not you rather go thither and be with Christ than stay in sin and vanity here on earth, so be it you were certain to be with Christ ? If you can say yea to this, then it is apparent that your loathness to die is either from the uncertainty of your salvation, or from the natural averseness to a dissolution, or both ; and not from an unwillingness to be with Christ, or a preferring the vanities of this world before the blessedness of that to come. Lastly, It may be God may lay that affliction on you, or use some other necessary means with you yet, before you die, that may make you more willing than now you are.

Doubt 19. ‘ God layeth upon me such heavy afflictions, that I cannot believe he loves me. He writeth bitter things against me, and taketh me for his enemy. I am afflicted in my health, in my name, in my children, and nearest friends, and in my estate. I live in continual poverty, or pinching distress of one kind or other ; yea, my very soul is filled with his terrors, and night and day is his hand heavy upon me.’

Answ. I have said enough to this before, nor do I think it needful to say any more, when the Holy Ghost hath said so much ; but

only to desire you to read what he hath written in Heb. xii. and Job throughout ; and Psal. xxxvii. lxxiii. and divers others. The next doubt is contrary.

Doubt 20. 'I read in Scripture, that through many tribulations we must enter into heaven, and that all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution ; and that he that taketh not up his cross, and so followeth Christ, cannot be his disciple. And that if we are not corrected, we are bastards, and not sons. But I never had any affliction from God, but have lived in constant prosperity to this day. Christ saith, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you." But all men, for aught I know, speak well of me ; and therefore I doubt of my sincerity.'

Ans. I would not have mentioned this doubt, but that I was so foolish as to be troubled with it myself ; and perhaps some others may be as foolish as I ; though I think but few in these times: our great friends have done so much to resolve them more effectually than words could have done. 1. Some of the texts speak only of man's duty of bearing persecution and tribulation, when God lays it on us, rather than of the event, that it shall certainly come. 2. Yet I think it ordinarily certain, and to be expected as to the event. Doubtless tribulation is God's common road to heaven. Every ignorant person is so well aware of this, that they delude themselves in their sufferings, saying, that God hath given them their punishment in this life, and therefore they hope he will not punish them in another. If any soul be so silly as to fear and doubt for want of affliction ; if none else will do the cure, let them follow my counsel, and I dare warrant them for this, and I will advise them to nothing but what is honest, yea, and necessary, and what I have tried effectually upon myself ; and I can assure you it cured me, and I can give it a 'Probatum est.' And first, see that you be faithful in your duty to all sinners within your reach ; be they great or small, gentlemen or beggars, do your duty in reproving them meekly and lovingly, yet plainly and seriously, telling them of the danger of God's everlasting wrath ; and when you find them obstinate, tell the church-officers of them, that they may do their duty ; and if yet they are unreformed, they may be excluded from the church's communion, and all Christian familiarity.

Try this course awhile, and if you meet with no afflictions, and get no more fists about your ears than your own, nor more tongues against you than formerly, tell me I am mistaken. Men basely baulk and shun almost all the displeasing, ungrateful work of Christianity of purpose, lest they should have sufferings in the flesh, and then they doubt of their sincerity for want of sufferings. My second advice is, Do but stay awhile in patience (but prepare your patience for a sharper encounter,) and do not tie God to your time. He hath not told you when your afflictions shall come. If he deal easier with you than with others, and give you longer time to prepare for them, be not you offended at that, and do not quarrel with your mercies. It is about seventeen years since I was troubled with this doubt, thinking I was no son, because I was not afflicted; and I think I have had few days without pain for this sixteen years since together, nor but few hours, if any one, for this six or seven years. And thus my scruple is removed.

And if yet any be troubled with this doubt, if the church's and common trouble be any trouble to them, shall I be bold to tell them my thoughts? (only understand that I pretend not to prophecy, but to conjecture at effects by the position of their moral causes.) I think that the righteous King of saints is even now, for our over-admiring rash zeal, and sharp, high profession, making for England so heavy an affliction, and a sharp scourge, to be inflicted by seduced, proud, self-conceited professors, as neither we nor our fathers did ever yet bear. Except it should prove the merciful intent of our Father, only to suffer them to ripen for their own destruction, to be a standing monument for the effectual warning of all after-ages of the church, whither pride and heady zeal may bring professors of holiness. And when they are full ripe, to do by them as at Munster, and in New England, that they may go no further, but their folly may be known to all: Amen. I have told you of my thoughts of this long ago, in my Book of Baptism.

All these doubts I have here answered, that you may see how necessary it is, that in all your troubles you be sure to distinguish between matter of doubting and matter of humiliation. Alas, what soul is so holy on the earth, but must daily say, "Forgive us our trespasses?" and cry out with Paul, "O wretched man that I am,

who shall deliver me from this body of death?" But at the same time we may thank God, through our Lord Jesus Christ. If every sin should make us doubt, we should do nothing but doubt. I know you may easily tell a long and a sad story of your sins; how you are troubled with this and that, and many a distemper, and weak and wanting in every grace and duty, and have committed many sins. But doth it follow that therefore you have no true grace? Learn therefore to be humbled for every sin, but not to doubt of your sincerity and salvation for every sin.

Direct. XXX. 'Whatsoever new doubtings do arise in your soul, see that you carefully discern whether they are such as must be resolved from the consideration of general grace, or of special grace. And especially be sure of this, that when you want or lose your certainty of sincerity and salvation, you have presently recourse to the probability of it, and lose not the comforts of that. Or if you should lose the sight of a probability of special grace, yet see that you have recourse at the utmost to general grace, and never let go the comforts of that at the worst.'

This rule is of unspeakable necessity and use for your peace and comfort. Here are three several degrees of the grounds of comfort. It is exceeding weakness for a man that is beaten from one of these holds, therefore to let go the other two. And because he cannot have the highest degree, therefore to conclude that he hath none at all.

I beseech you in all your doubtings and complainings, still remember the two rules here laid down. 1. All doubts arise not from the same cause, and therefore must not have the same cure. Let the first thing which you do upon every doubt, be this: To consider, whether it come from the unbelieving or low apprehensions of the general grounds of comfort, or from the want of evidence of special grace. For that which is a fit remedy for one of these, will do little for the cure of the other. 2. If your doubting be only, Whether you be sincere in believing, loving, hoping, repenting, and obeying, then it will not answer this doubt, though you discern never so much of God's merciful nature, or Christ's gracious office, or the universal sufficiency of his death and satisfaction, or the freeness and extent of the promise of pardon. For I profess conside-

rately, that I do not know in all the body of popery concerning merits, justification, human satisfaction, assurance, or any other point about grace, for which we unchurch them, that they err half so dangerously as Saltmarsh, and such Antinomians, do in this point, when they say, That Christ hath repented and believed for us; meaning it of that faith and repentance which he hath made the conditions of our salvation. And that we must no more question our own faith, than we must question Christ the object of it. It will be no saving plea at the day of judgment to say, Though I repented not, and believed not, yet Christ died for me, or God is merciful, or Christ repented and believed for me, or God made me a free promise and gift of salvation, if I would repent and believe. What comfort would such an answer give them? And therefore doubtless it will not serve now to quiet any knowing Christian against those doubts that arise from the want of particular evidence of special grace, though in their own place, the general grounds of comfort are of absolute necessity thereto.

2. On the other side, If your doubts arise from any defect in your apprehensions of general grace, it is not your looking after marks in yourself that is the way to resolve them. I told you in the beginning, that the general grounds of comfort lie in four particulars (that square foundation which will bear up all the faith of the saints.) First, God's merciful and inconceivable good and gracious nature, and his love to mankind. Secondly, The gracious nature of the Mediator God and Man, with his most gracious, undertaken office of saving and reconciling. Thirdly, The sufficiency of Christ's death and satisfaction for all the world, to save them if they will accept him and his grace. I put it in terms beyond dispute, because I would not build up believer's comforts on points which godly divines do contradict (as little as may be.) Yet I am past all doubt myself, that Christ did actually make satisfaction to God's justice for ALL, and that no man perisheth for want of an expiatory sacrifice, but for want of faith to believe and apply it, or for want of repentance and yielding to recovering grace. The fourth is, The universal grant of pardon, and right to salvation, on condition of faith and repentance. If your doubt arise from the

ignorance or overlooking of any of these, to these must you have recourse for your cure.

Where note, That all those doubts which come from the greatness of your sin, as such that you think will not therefore be forgiven, or that come from the sense of unworthiness (in a legal sense,) or want of merit in yourself, and all your doubts, whether God be willing to accept and forgive you, though you should repent and believe : or, whether any sacrifice was offered by Christ for your sins ; I say, all these come from your ignorance or unbelief of some or all of the four general grounds here mentioned ; and from them must be cured.

Note also in a special manner, That there is a great difference between these four general grounds, and your particular evidences, in point of certainty. For these four corner-stones are fast founded beyond all possibility of removal, so that they are always of as undoubted certainty as that the heaven is over your head ; and they are immutable, still the same. These you are commanded strictly to believe with a divine faith, as being the clearly revealed truths of God ; and if you should not believe them, yet they remain firm and true, and your unbelief should not make void the universal promise and grace of God. But your own evidences of special grace are not so certain, so clear, or so immutable ; nor are you bound to believe them, but to search after them that you may know them. You are not bound by any word of God strictly to believe that you do believe, or repent, but to try and discern it. This then is the first part of this Direction, That you always discover whether your troubles arise from low unbelieving, or ignorant thoughts of God's mercifulness, Christ's gracious nature and office, general satisfaction, or the universal promise : Or, whether they arise from want of evidence of sincerity in yourself. And accordingly in your thoughts apply the remedy.

The second part of the Direction is, that you hold fast probabilities of special grace, when you lose your certainty, and that you hold fast your general grounds, when you lose both your former. Never forget this in any of your doubts.

You say, your faith and obedience have such breaches and sad defects in them, that you cannot be certain that they are sincere.

Suppose it be so : Do you see no great likelihood or hopes yet that they are sincere ? If you do (as I think many Christians easily may, that yet receive not a proportionable comfort) remember that this is no small mercy, but matter of great consolation.

But suppose the worst, that you see no grace in yourself, yet you cannot be sure you have none ; for it may be there, and you not see it. Yea, suppose the worst, that you were sure that you had no true grace at all, yet remember that you have still abundant cause of comfort in God's general grace. Do you think you must needs despair, or give up all hope and comfort, or conclude yourself irrecoverably lost, because you are graceless ? Why, be it known to you, there is that ground of consolation in general grace, that may make the hearts of the very wicked to leap for joy. Do I need to prove that to you ? You know that the Gospel is called, " Glad tidings of salvation," and the preachers of it are to tell those to whom they preach it, " Behold, we bring you tidings of great joy, and glad tidings to all people." And you know before the Gospel comes to men they are miserable. If then it be glad tidings, and tidings of great joy to all the unconverted where it comes, why should it not be so to you ? And where is your great joy ? If you be graceless, is it nothing to know that God is exceeding merciful, " slow to anger, ready to forgive, pardoning iniquities, transgression, and sin," loving mankind ? Is it nothing to know that the Lord hath brought infinite mercy and goodness down into human flesh ? And hath taken on him the most blessed office of reconciling, and is become the Lamb of God ? Is it nothing to you, that all your sins have a sufficient sacrifice paid for them, so that you are certain not to perish for want of a ransom ? Is it nothing to you that God hath made such an universal grant of pardon and salvation to all that will believe ? And that you are not on the terms of the mere law of works, to be judged for not obeying in perfection ? Suppose you are never so certainly graceless, is it not a ground of unspeakable comfort, that you may be certain that nothing can condemn you, but a flat refusal or unwillingness to have Christ and his salvation ? This is a certain truth, which may comfort a man as yet unsanctified, that sin merely as sin shall not condemn him,

nor any thing in the world, but the final, obstinate refusal of the remedy, which thereby leaveth all other sin unpardoned.

Now I would ask you this question in your greatest fears that you are out of Christ : Are you willing to have Christ to pardon, sanctify, guide, and save you, or not? If you are, then you are a true believer, and did not know it. If you are not, if you will but wait on God's word in hearing, and reading, and consider frequently and seriously of the necessity and excellency of Christ and glory, and the evil of sin, and the vanity of the world, and will but beg earnestly of God to make you willing, you shall find that God hath not appointed you this means in vain, and that this way will be more profitable to you than all your complainings. See therefore when you are at the very lowest, that you forsake not the comforts of general grace.

And indeed those that deny any general grace or redemption, do leave poor Christians in a very lamentable condition. For, alas! assurance of special grace (yea, or a high probability) is not so common a thing as mere disputers against doubting have imagined. And when a poor Christian is beaten from his assurance (which few have,) he hath nothing but probabilities ; and when he hath no confident, probable persuasion of special grace, where is he then ? And what hath he left to support his soul ? I will not so far now meddle with that controversy, as to open further how this opinion tends to leave most Christians in desperation, for all the pretences it hath found. And I had done more, but that general redemption or satisfaction, is commonly taught in the maintaining of the general sufficiency of it, though men understand not how they contradict themselves.

But perhaps you will say, ' This is cold comfort ; for I may as well argue thus, Christ will damn sinners ; I am a sinner, therefore he will damn me ; as to argue thus, Christ will save sinners ; I am a sinner, therefore he will save me.' I answer, There is no shew of soundness in either of these arguments. It is not a certainty that Christ will save you, that can be gathered from general grace alone ; that must be had from assurance of special grace superadded to the general. But a conditional certainty you may have from general grace only, and thus you may soundly and in-

fallibly argue, ‘ God hath made a grant to every sinful man, of pardon and salvation through Christ’s sacrifice, if they will but repent and believe in Christ ; but I am a sinful man, therefore God hath made this grant of pardon and salvation to me.’

Direct. XXXI. ‘ If God do bless you with an able, faithful, prudent, judicious pastor, take him for your guide under Christ in the way to salvation ; and open to him your case, and desire his advice in all your extraordinary, pressing necessities, where you have found the advice of other godly friends to be insufficient ; and this not once or twice only, but as often as such pressing necessities shall return. Or if your own pastor be more defective for such a work, make use of some other minister of Christ, who is more meet.’

Here I have these several things to open to you. 1. That it is your duty to seek this Direction from the guides of the church. 2. When and in what cases you should do this. 3. To what end, and how far. 4. What ministers they be that you should choose thereto. 5. In what manner you must open your case, that you may receive satisfaction.

1. The first hath two parts, (1.) That you must open your case. (2.) And that to your pastor. (1.) The devil hath great advantage while you keep his counsel ; two are better than one ; for if one of them fall, he hath another to help him. It is dangerous, resisting such an enemy alone. An uniting of forces oft procureth victory. God giveth others knowledge, prudence, and other gifts for our good ; that so every member of the body may have need of another, and each be useful to the other. An independency of Christian upon Christian, is most unchristian ; much more of people on their guides. It ceaseth to be a member, which is separated from the body ; and to make no use of the body or fellow members, is next to separation from them. Sometimes bashfulness is the cause, sometimes self-confidence (a far worse cause ;) but whatever is the cause of Christians smothering their doubts, the effects are oft sad. The disease is oft gone so far, that the cure is very difficult, before some bashful, or proud, or tender patients will open their disease. The very opening of a man’s grief to a

faithful friend, doth oft ease the heart of itself. (2.) And that this should be done to your pastor, I will shew you anon.

2. But you must understand well when this is your duty. (1.) Not for every small infirmity, which accompanies Christians in their daily most fruitful conversation. Nor yet in every lesser doubt, which may be otherwise resolved. It is a folly and a wrong to physicians to run to them for every cut finger or prick with a pin. Every neighbor can help you in this. (2.) Nor except it be a weighty case indeed, go not first to a minister. But first study the case yourself, and seek God's direction : if that will not serve, open your case to your nearest bosom friend that is godly and judicious. (3.) And in these two cases always go to your pastor. In case more private means can do you no good, then God calls you to seek further. If a cut finger so fester that ordinary means will not cure it, you must go to the physician. If the case be weighty and dangerous ; for then none but the more prudent advice is to be trusted. If you be struck with a dangerous disease, I would not have you delay so long, nor wrong yourself so much, as to stay while you tamper with every woman's medicine, but go presently to the physician. So if you either fall into any grievous sin, or any terrible pangs of conscience, or any great straits and difficulties about matters of doctrine or practice, go presently to your pastor for advice. The devil, and pride, and bashfulness, will do their utmost to hinder you ; but see that they prevail not.

3. Next consider to what end you must do this. Not, (1.) Either to expect that a minister can of himself create peace in you ; or that all your doubts should vanish as soon as ever you have opened your mind. Only the great Peace-maker, the Prince of peace, can create peace in you : ascribe not to any the office of the Holy Ghost, to be your effectual comforter. To expect more from man than belongs to man, is the way to receive nothing from him, but to cause God to blast to you the best endeavors. (2.) Nor must you resolve to take all merely from the word of your pastor, as if he were infallible : nor absolutely to judge of yourself as he judgeth. For he may be too rigorous, or more commonly too charitable in his opinion of you : there may be much of your disposition and conversation unknown to him, which may hinder his right judging.

But, (1.) You must use your pastor as the ordained instrument and messenger of the Lord Jesus and his Spirit, appointed to speak a word in season to the weary, and to shew to man his righteousness, and to strengthen the weak hands and feeble knees ; and more, to bind and loose on earth, as Christ doth bind and loose in heaven. As Christ and his Spirit do only save in the principal place, and yet ministers save souls in subordination to them as his instruments ; Acts xxvi. 17, 18. 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16. James v. 20. So Christ and the Spirit are, as principal causes, the only comforters ; but his ministers are comforters under him. (2.) And that which you must expect from them are these two things. 1. You must expect those fuller discoveries of God's will than you are able to make yourself, by which you may have assurance of your duty to God, and of the sense of Scripture, which expresseth how God will deal with you : that so a clearer discovery of God's mind may resolve your doubts. 2. In the mean time, till you can come to a full resolution, you may and must somewhat stay yourself on the very judgment of your pastor : not as infallible, but as a discovery of the probability of your good or bad estate ; and so of your duty also. Though you will not renounce your own understanding, and believe any man when you know he is deceived, or would deceive you, yet you would so far suspect your own reason and value another's, as to have a special regard to every man's judgment in his own profession. If the physician tell you that your disease is not dangerous, or the lawyer that your cause is good, it will more comfort you than if another man should say as much. It may much stay your heart till you can reach to clearer evidences and assurance, to have a pastor that is well acquainted with you, and is faithful and judicious, to tell you that he verily thinks that you are in a safe condition. (3.) But the chief use of his advice is, not so much to tell you what he thinks of you, as to give you Directions how you may judge of yourself, and come out of your trouble : besides the benefit of his prayers to God for you.

4. Next let me tell you what men you must choose to open your mind to : and they must be, (1.) Men of judgment and knowledge, and not the ignorant, be they never so honest : else they may deceive you, not knowing what they do ; either for want of

understanding the Scripture, and the nature of grace and sin ; or for want of skill to deal with both weak consciences, and deep, deceitful hearts. (2.) They must be truly fearing God, and of experience in this great work. For a troubled soul is seldom well resolved and comforted merely out of a book, but from the book and experience both together. Carnal or formal men will but make a jest at the doubts of a troubled Christian ; or at least will give you such formal remedies as will prove no cure : either they will persuade you, as the Antinomians do, that you should trust God with your soul, and never question your faith : or that you do ill to trouble yourself about such things : or they will direct you only to the comforts of general grace, and tell you only that God is merciful, and Christ died for sinners ; which are the necessary foundations of our peace ; but will not answer particular doubts of our own sincerity, and of our interest in Christ : or else they will make you believe that holiness of heart and life (which is the thing you look after) is it that troubleth you, and breeds all your scruples. Or else with the Papists, they will send you to your merits for comfort ; or to some vindictive penance in fastings, pilgrimages, or the like ; or to some saint departed, or angel, or to the pardons or indulgences of the pope ; or to a certain formal, carnal devotion, to make God amends. (3.) They must be men of downright faithfulness, that will deal plainly and freely, though not cruelly ; and not like those tender surgeons that will leave the cure undone for fear of hurting : meddle not with men-pleasers and daubers, that will presently speak comfort to you as confidently as if they had known you twenty years, when perhaps they know little of your heart or case. Deal not with such as resolve to humor you. (4.) They must be men of fidelity, and well tried to be such, that you must trust them with those secrets which you are called to reveal. (5.) They must be men of great staidness and wisdom, that they may neither rashly pass their judgment, nor set you upon unsound, unwarrantable, or dangerous courses. (6.) It is suspicious if they be men that are so impudent as to draw out your secrets, and screw themselves deeper into your privatest thoughts and ways than is meet : yet a compassionate minister, when he seeth that poor Christians do entangle themselves by keeping secret their

troubles, or else that they hazard themselves by hiding the greatest of their sins, like Achan, Saul, or Ananias and Sapphira, and so play the hypocrites ; in these cases he may and must urge them to deal openly. (7.) Above all be sure that those that you seek advice of, be sound in the faith, and free from the two desperate plagues of notorious false doctrine, and separating, dividing inclinations, that do but hunt about to make disciples to themselves. There are two of the former sort, and three of the latter, that I would charge you to take heed of (and yet all is but four.) 1. Among those that err from the faith, (next to pagans, Jews, and infidels, whether Ranters, Seekers, or Socinians, which I think few sober, godly men are so much in danger of, because of their extreme vileness,) I would especially have you avoid the Antinomians, being the greatest pretenders to the right comforting afflicted consciences in the world ; but upon my certain knowledge I dare say, they are notorious subverters of the very nature of the Gospel, and that free grace which they so much talk of, and the great dishonorers of the Lord Jesus, whom they seem so highly to extol. They are those mountebanks and quacksalvers that delude the world by vain ostentation, and kill more than they will cure. 2. Next to them, take heed of Papists, who will go to Rome, to saints, to angels, to merits, to the most carnal, delusory means for comfort, when they should go to Scripture and to heaven for it.

And then take heed that you fall not into the hands of separating dividers of Christ's church. The most notorious and dangerous of them are of these three sorts. 1. The last mentioned, the Papists : they are the most notorious schismatics and separatists that ever God's church did know on earth. For my part, I think their schism is more dangerous and wicked than the rest of their false doctrine. The unmerciful, proud, self-seeking wretches, would, like the Donatists, make us believe that God hath no true church on earth but they ; and that all the Christians in Ethiopia, Asia, Germany, Hungary, France, England, Scotland, Ireland, Belgia, and the rest of the world, that acknowledge not their pope of Rome to be head of all the churches in the world, are none of Christ's churches, nor ever were. Thus do they separate from all the churches on earth, and confine all religion and salvation to

themselves, who so notoriously depart from Christ's way of salvation. Indeed the extreme diligence that they use in visiting the sick, and soliciting all men to their church and way, is plainly to get themselves followers; and they are everywhere more industrious to enlarge the pope's kingdom than Christ's. So far are they from studying the unity of the Catholic church, which they so much talk of, that they will admit none to be of that church, nor to be saved, but their own party, as if indeed the pope had the keys of heaven. Indeed they are the most impudent sectaries and schismatics on earth. 2. The next to them are the Anabaptists, whose doctrine is not in itself so dangerous as their schism, and gathering disciples so zealously to themselves. And so strange a curse of God hath followed them hitherto, as may deter any sober Christian from rash adventuring on their way. Even now when they are higher in the world than ever they were on earth, yet do the judicious see God's heavy judgment upon them, in their congregations and conversation. 3. Lastly, Meddle not with those commonly called Separatists, for they will make a prey of you for the increase of their party. I do not mean that you should separate from these two last, as they do from us, and have nothing to do with them, nor acknowledge them Christians: but seek not their advice, and make them not of your counsel. You will do as one that goes to a physician that hath the plague, to be cured of a cut finger, if you go for your comfort to any of these seducers. But if you have a pastor that is sound in the main doctrines of religion, and is studious of the unity and peace of the church, such a man you may use, though in many things mistaken; for he will not seek to make a prey of you by drawing you to his party; let him be Lutheran, Calvinist, Arminian, Episcopal, Independent, or Presbyterian, so he be sound in the main, and free from division. Thus I have shewn you the qualifications of these men, that you must seek advice of.

(8.) Let me next add this; Let them be rather pastors than private men, if it may be; and rather your own pastors than others, if they are fit. For the first consider, 1. It is their office to be guides of Christ's disciples under him, and to be spiritual physicians for the curing of souls. And experience telleth us (and

sadly of late) what a curse followeth those that step beyond the bounds of their calling by invading this office, and that God blesseth means to them that keep within his order ; 1 Thess. v. 12, 13. Heb. xiii. 7. 17. Not but that private men may help you in this, as a private neighbor may give you a medicine to cure your disease? but you will not so soon trust them in any weighty case as you will the physician. 2. Besides, ministers have made it the study of their lives, and therefore are liker to understand it than others. As for those that think long study no more conducive to the knowledge of the Scriptures, than if men studied not at all, they may as well renounce reason, and dispute for preeminency of beasts above men, as renounce study, which is but the use of reason. But it appears how considerately these men speak themselves, and whence it comes, and how much credit a sober christian should give them ! Let them read Psalm i. 2, 3. Heb. v. 11—14. 1 Tim. iv. 13—16, and 2 Tim. ii. 15, and then let them return to their wits. Paul commands Timothy, though he was from his youth acquainted with the scriptures, “Meditate upon these things ; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all.” How much need have we to do so now? 3. Also ministers are usually most experienced in this work ; and wisdom requires you no more to trust your soul, than you would your body, with an unexperienced man.

And if it may be (he being fit) let it be rather your own pastor than another : 1. Because it belongeth to his peculiar place and charge, to direct the souls of his own congregation. 2. Because he is likelier to know you, and to fit his advice to your estate, as having better opportunity than others to be acquainted with your conversation.

5. Next consider, in what manner you must open your grief, if you would have cure. (1.) Do it as truly as you can. Make the matter neither better nor worse than it is. Specially take heed of dealing like Ananias, pretending to open all (as he did to give all) when you do but open some common infirmities, and hide all the most disgraceful distempers of your heart, and sins of your life. The vomit of confession must work to the bottom, and fetch up that hidden sin, which is it that continueth your calamity. Read Mr

T. Hooker in his "Soul's Preparation," concerning this confession, who shews you the danger of not going to the bottom.

(2.) You must not go to a minister to be cured merely by good words, as wizards do by charms; and so think that all is well when he hath spoken comfortably to you. But you must go for direction for your own practice, that so the cure may be done by leisure when you come home. Truly most even of the godly that I have known, do go to a minister for comfort, as silly people go to a physician for physic. If the physician could stroke them whole, or give them a pennyworth of some pleasant stuff that would cure all in an hour, then they would praise him. But alas, the cure will not be done, 1. Without cost. 2. Nor without time and patience. 3. Nor without taking down displeasing medicines; and so, they let all alone. So you come to a minister for advice and comfort, and you look that his words should comfort you before he leaves you, or at least, some short, small direction to take home with you. But he tells you, if you will be cured you must more resolve against that disquieting corruption and passion; you must more meekly submit to reproof; you must walk more watchfully and conscientiously with God and men; and then you must not give ear to the tempter, with many the like. He gives you, as I have done here, a bill of thirty several Directions, and tells you, you must practice all these. O this seems a tedious course: you are never the nearer comfort for hearing these; it must be by long and diligent practising them. Is it not a foolish patient that will come home from the physician and say, 'I have heard all that he said, but I am never the better?' So you say, 'I have heard all that the minister said, and I have never the more comfort.' But have you done all that he bid you, and taken all the medicine that he gave you,? Alas, the cure is most to be done by yourself (under Christ) when you come home. The minister is but the physician to direct you what course to take for the cure. And then as silly people run from one physician to another, hearing what all can say, and desirous to know what every man thinks of them, but thoroughly follow the advice of none, but perhaps take one medicine from one man, and one from another, and let most even of those lie by them in the box, and so perish more certainly than if they never meddled

with hny at all ; so do most troubled souls hear what one man saith, and what another saith, and seldom thoroughly follow the advice of any : but when one man's words do not cure them, they say, ' This is not the man that God hath appointed to cure me.' And so another, and that is not the man : when they should rather say, ' This is not the way,' than, ' This is not the man.' This lazy complaining is not it that will do the work, but faithful practising the Directions given you.

But I know some will say, That it is near to Popish auricular confession, which I here persuade christians to, and it is to bring christians under the tyranny of the priests again, and make them acquainted with all men's secrets, and masters of their consciences.

Ans. 1. To the last, I say to the railing devil of this age, no more but " The Lord rebuke thee." If any minister have wicked ends, let the God of heaven convert him, or root him out of his church, and cast him among the weeds and briars. But is it not the known voice of sensuality, and hell, to cast reproaches upon the way and ordinances of God ? Who knoweth not that it is the very office of the ministry, to be teachers and guides to men in matters of salvation, and overseers of them ? and that they watch for their souls, as those that must give an account, and the people, therefore, are bound to obey them ? Heb. xiii. 7. 17. Should not the shepherd know his sheep, and their strayings and diseases ; how else shall he cure them ? Should not the physician hear the patient open all his disease, yea, study to discover to the utmost every thing he knows ; and all little enough to the cure ? A disease unknown is unlike to be cured ; and a disease well known is half cured. Mr. Thomas Hooker saith truly, it is with many people as with some over-modest patients, who having a disease in some secret place, they will not for shame reveal it to the physician till it be past cure, and then they must lose their lives by their modesty : so do many by their secret and more disgraceful sins. Not that every man is bound to open all his sins to his pastor ; but those that cannot well be otherwise cured, he must ; either if the sense of the guilt cannot be removed, and true assurance of pardon obtained : or else, if power against the sin be not otherwise obtained, but that it still prevaieth ; in both these cases we must go to those

that God hath made our directors and guides. I am confident many a thousand souls do long strive against anger, lust, flesh-pleasing, worldliness, and trouble of conscience to little purpose, who if they would but have taken God's way, and sought for help, and opened all their case to their minister, they might have been delivered in a good measure long ago. *Answer.* 2. And for Popish confession, I detest it. We would not persuade men that there is a necessity of confessing every sin to a minister, before it can be pardoned. Nor do we do it in a perplexed formality only at one time of the year ; nor in order to Popish pardons or satisfactions ; but we would have men go for physic to their souls, as they do for their bodies, when they feel they have need. And let me advise all Christian congregations to practise this excellent duty more. See that you knock oftener at your pastor's door, and ask his advice in all your pressing-necessities ; do not let him sit quietly in his study for you ; make him know by experience, that the tenth part of a minister's labor is not in the pulpit. If your sins are strong, and you have wounded conscience deep, go for his advice for a safe cure ; many a man's sore festers to damnation for want of this ; and poor, ignorant and scandalous sinners have far more need to do this than troubled consciences. I am confident, if the people of my congregation did but do their duty for the good of their own souls in private, seeking advice of their ministers, and opening their cases to them, they would find work for ten ministers at least ; and yet those two that they have, have more work than they are able to do already. Especially ministers in small country congregations, might do abundance of good this way ; and their people are much to blame that they come not oftener to them for advice ; this were the way to make Christians indeed. The devil knows this, and therefore so envies it, that he never did more against a design in the world ; he hath got the maintenance alienated that should have maintained them, that so they may have but one minister in a congregation, and then among the greater congregations this work is impossible for want of instruments ; yea, he is about getting down the very churches and settled ministry, if God will suffer him. He setteth his instruments to rail at priests and discipline, and to call Christ's yoke tyranny ; because while the garden

is hedged in, he is fain, with envy, to look over the hedge. What if a man (like those of our times) should come to a town that have an epidemical pleurisy or fever, and say, 'Do not run like fools to these physicians, they do but cheat you, and rob your purses, and seek themselves, and seek to be lords of your lives.' It is possible some do so ; but if by these persuasions the silly people should lose their lives, how well had their new preacher befriended them ? Such friends will those prove at last to your souls, that dissuade you from obeying the guidance and discipline of your overseers, and dare call the ordinances of the Lord of glory tyrannical, and reproach those that Christ hath set over them. England will not have Christ by his officers rule over them, and the several congregations will not obey him. But he will make them know, before many years are past, that they refused their own mercy, and knew not the things that belong to their peace, and that he will be master at last in spite of malice, and the proudest of his foes. If they get by this bargain of refusing Christ's government, and despising his ministers, and making the peace, unity, and prosperity of his church, and the souls of men, a prey to their proud misguided fancies and passions, then let them boast of the bargain when they have tried it. Only I would entreat one thing of them, not to judge too confidently till they have seen the end.

And for all you tender-conscienced Christians, whom by the ministry the Lord hath begotten or confirmed to himself, as ever you will shew yourselves thankful for so great a mercy, as ever you will hold that you have got, or grow to more perfection, and attain that blessed life to which Christ hath given you his ministers to conduct you ; see that you stick close to a judicious, godly, faithful ministry, and make use of them while you have them. Have you strong lusts, or deep wounds in conscience, or a heavy burden of doubtings or distress ? Seek their advice. God will have his own ordinance and officers have the chief instrumental hand in your cure. The same means oftentimes in another hand shall not do it. Yet I would have you make use of all able private Christians' help also.

I will tell you the reason why our ministers have not urged this so much upon you, nor so plainly acquainted their congregations

with the necessity of opening your case to your minister, and seeking his advice.

1. Some in opposition to Popery have gone too far on the other extreme ; perhaps sinning as deeply in neglect, as the Papists do in formal excess. It is a good sign that an opinion is true, when it is near to error. For truth is the very next step to error. The small thread of truth runs between the close adjoining extremes of error.

2. Some ministers knowing the exceeding greatness of the burden, are loath to put themselves upon it. This one work, of giving advice to all that ought to come and open their case to us, if our people did but what they ought to do for their own safety, would itself, in great congregations, be more than preaching every day in the week. What then is all the rest of the work ? And how can one man, yea, or five, do this to five thousand souls ? And then when it lieth undone, the malicious reproachers rail at the ministers, and accuse the people of unfitness to be church-members ; which howsoever there may be some cause of, yet not so much as they suggest ; and that unfitness would best be cured by the diligence of more laborers, which they think to cure, by removing the few that do remain.

3. Also some ministers seeing that they have more work than they can do already, think themselves incapable of more, and therefore that it is vain to put their people on it, to seek more.

4. Some ministers are over-modest, and think it to be unfit to desire people to open their secrets to them ; in confessing their sins and corrupt inclinations, and opening their wants ; and indeed any ingenuous man will be backward to pry into the secrets of others. But when God hath made it our office, under Christ, to be physicians to the souls of our people, it is but bloody cruelty to connive at their pride and carnal bashfulness, or hypocritical covering of their sins, and to let them die of their disease rather than we will urge them to disclose it.

5. Some ministers are loath to tell people of their duty in this, lest it should confirm the world in their malicious conceit, that we should be masters of men's consciences, and would lord it over them. This is as much folly and cruelty, as if the master and pi-

lot of the ship should let the mariners govern the ship by the major vote, and run all on shelves, and drown themselves and him, and all for fear of being thought lordly and tyrannical, in taking the government of the ship upon himself, and telling the mariners that it is their duty to obey him.

6. Most godly ministers do tell people in general, of the necessity of such a dependence on their teachers, as learners in the school of Christ should have on them that are ushers under him the chief master ; and they do gladly give advice to those that do seek to them : but they do not so particularly and plainly acquaint people with their duty, in opening to them the particular sores of their souls.

It is also the policy of the devil, to make people believe that their ministers are too stout, and will not stoop to a compassionate hearing of their case ; especially if ministers carry themselves strangely, at too great a distance from their people. I would earnestly entreat all ministers therefore to be as familiar, and as much with their people as they can. Papists and other seducers, will insinuate themselves into their familiarity, if we be strange. If you teach them not in their houses, these will creep into their houses, and lead them captive. I persuade others of my brethren to that which myself am disabled from performing ; being by constant weakness (besides unavoidable business) confined to my chamber. But those that can perform it, will find this a most necessary and profitable work. And let not poor people believe the devil, who tells them that ministers are so proud, only to discourage them from seeking their advice. Go try them once before you believe it.

Lastly, Remember this, that it is not enough that you once opened your case to your pastor, but do it as often as necessity urgeth you to call for his advice ; though not on every light occasion. Live in such dependence on the advice and guidance of your pastor (under Christ) for your soul, as you do on the advice of the physician for your body. Read Mal. ii. 7. And let ministers read 6, 8, 9.

Direct. XXXII. ‘ As ever you would live in peace and comfort, and well pleasing unto God, be sure that you understand and deeply consider wherein the height of a christian life, and the greatest part of our duty doth consist ; to wit, In a loving delight

in God, and a thankful and cheerful obedience to his will; and then make this your constant aim, and be still aspiring after it, and let all other affections and endeavors be subservient unto this.'

This one rule well practised, would do wonders on the souls of poor Christians, in dispelling all their fears and troubles, and helping not only to a settled peace, but to live in the most comfortable state that can be expected upon earth. Write therefore these two or three words deep in your understandings and memory; that the life which God is best pleased with, and we should be always endeavoring, is, a loving delight in God through Christ; and a thankful and cheerful obedience to him. I do not say, that godly sorrows, and fears, and jealousies are no duties; but these are the great duties, to which the rest should all subserve. Misapprehending the state of duty, and the very nature of a Christian life, must needs make sad distempers in men's hearts and conversations. Many Christians look upon brokenheartedness, and much grieving, and weeping for sin, as if it were the great thing that God delighteth in, and requireth of them; and therefore they bend all their endeavors this way; and are still striving with their hearts to break them more, and wringing their consciences to squeeze out some tears; and they think no sermon, no prayer, no meditation, speeds so well with them, as that which can help them to grieve or weep. I am far from persuading men against humiliation and godly sorrow, and tenderness of heart. But yet I must tell you, that this is a sore error that you lay so much upon it, and so much overlook that great and noble work and state to which it tendeth. Do you think that God hath any pleasure in your sorrows as such? Doth it do him good to see you dejected, afflicted and tormented? Alas, it is only as your sorrows do kill your sins, and mortify your fleshly lusts, and prepare for your peace and joys, that God regards them. Because God doth speak comfortably to troubled, drooping spirits, and tells them that he delighteth in the contrite, and loveth the humble, and bindeth up the brokenhearted; therefore men misunderstanding him, do think they should do nothing, but be still breaking their own hearts. Whereas God speaks it but partly to shew his hatred to the proud, and partly to shew his tender compassions to the humbled, that they might not be overwhelmed or despair.

But, O Christians, understand and consider, that all your sorrows are but preparatives to your joys ; and that it is a higher and sweeter work that God calls you to, and would have you spend your time and strength in. (1.) The first part of it is love : a work that is wages to itself. He that knows what it is to live in the love of God, doth know that Christianity is no tormenting and discontented life. (2.) The next part is, “Delight in God, and in the hopes and forethoughts of everlasting glory.” Psal. xxxvii. 4, “Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart.” This is it that you should be bending your studies and endeavors for, that your soul might be able to delight itself in God. (3.) The third part is thankfulness and praise. Though I say not as some, that we should be moved by no fears or desires of the reward (that is, of God,) but act only from thankfulness (as though we had all that we expect already) yet let me desire you to take special notice of this truth ; that thankfulness must be the main principle of all Gospel-obedience. And this is not only true of the regenerate after faith, but even the wicked themselves, who are called to repent and believe, are called to do it in a glad and thankful sense of the mercy offered them in Christ. All the world being fallen under God’s wrath and deserved condemnation, and the Lord Jesus having become a sacrifice and ransom for all, and so brought all from that legal necessity of perishing which they were under, the Gospel which brings them the news of this, is glad tidings of great joy to them ; and the very justifying act which they are called to, is, thankfully to accept Christ as one that hath already satisfied for their sins, and will save them, if they accept him, and will follow his saving counsel, and use his saving means ; and the saving work which they must proceed in, is, thankfully to obey that Redeemer whom they believe in. So that as general redemption is the very foundation of the new world and its government, so thankfulness for this redemption is the very life of justifying faith and Gospel obedience. And therefore the denial of this universal redemption (as to the price and satisfaction) doth both disable wicked men (if they receive it) from coming to Christ by true justifying faith (which is, the thankful acceptance of Christ as he is offered with his benefits : and this thankfulness must be for what he hath

done in dying for us; as well as for what he will do in pardoning and saving us,) and it doth double all true believers from Gospel, grateful obedience, whenever they lose the sight of their evidences of special grace (which, also, how ordinary is it with them!) For when they cannot have special grace in their eye to be thankful for, according to this doctrine they must have none; because they can be no surer that Christ died for them, than they are that themselves are sincere believers and truly sanctified. And when thankfulness for Christ's death and redemption ceaseth, Gospel obedience ceaseth, and legal and slavish terrors do take place. Though the same cannot be said of thankfulness for special renewing and pardoning grace.

(4.) The fourth part of the Christian life is cheerful obedience. God loveth a cheerful giver, and so he doth in every part of obedience, "Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, thou shalt serve thy enemies in hunger and thirst," &c. Deut. xxviii. 47.

Will you now lay all this together, and make it for the time to come your business, and try whether it will not be the truest way to comfort, and make your life a blessed life? Will you make it your end in hearing, reading, praying, and meditation, to raise your soul to delight in God? Will you strive as much to work it to this delight as ever you did to work it to sorrow? Certainly you have more reason; and certainly there is more matter of delight in the face and love of God, than in all the things in the world besides. Consider but the Scripture commands, and then lay to heart your duty. Phil. iv. 4. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again, I say, rejoice." Chap. iii. 1. Zech. x. 7. Joel ii. 23. Isa. xli. 16. Psal. xxxiii. 1, "Rejoice in the Lord O ye righteous, for praise is comely for the upright." Psal. xcvii. 12. 1 Thess. v. 16, "Rejoice evermore." 1 Pet. i. 6. 8. Rom. v. 2. John iv. 36. Psal. v. 11. xxxiii. 21. xxxv. 9. lxvi. 6. lxviii. 3, 4. lxxi. 28. lxxxix. 16. cv. 3. cxlix. 2. xliii. 4. xxvii. 6. John xvi. 24. Rom. xv. 13. xiv. 17, "The kingdom of God is in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." Gal. v. 22. Psal. xxxii. 11. "Be glad in the Lord, and rejoice O ye righteous, and shout for

joy all ye that are upright in heart." Psal. cxxxii. 9. 16. v. 11. xxxv. 27. Heb. iii. 18. With a hundred more the like. Have you made conscience of this great duty according to its excellency and these pressing commands of God? Have you made conscience of the duties of praise, thanksgiving, and cheerful obedience, as much as for grieving for sin? Perhaps you will say, 'I cannot do it for want of assurance. If I knew that I were one of the righteous, and upright in heart, then I could be glad, and shout for joy.' *Ans.* 1. I have before shewed you how you may know that; when you discover it in yourself, see that you make more conscience of this duty. 2. You have had hopes and probabilities of your sincerity. Did you endeavor to answer those probabilities in your joys? 3. If you would but labor to get this delight in God, it would help you to assurance; for it would be one of your clearest evidences.

O how the subtle enemy disadvantageth the Gospel, by the misapprehensions and dejected spirits of believers! It is the very design of the ever blessed God, to glorify love and mercy as highly in the work of redemption, as ever he glorified omnipotency in the work of creation. And he hath purposely unhinged the Sabbath which was appointed to commemorate that work of power in creation, to the first day of the week, that it might be spent as a weekly day of thanksgiving and praise for the now more glorious work of redemption, that love might not only be equally admired with power, but even go before it. So that he hath laid the foundation of the kingdom of grace in love and mercy; and in love and mercy hath he framed the whole structure of the edifice; and love and mercy are written in legible indelible characters upon every piece. And the whole frame of his work and temple-service, hath he so composed, that all might be the resounding echos of love, and the praise and glorious commemoration of love and mercy might be the great business of our solemn assemblies. And the new creation within us, and without us, is so ordered, that love, thankfulness, and delight, might be both the way and the end. And the serpent who most opposeth God where he seeketh most glory, especially the glory of his grace, doth labor so successfully to obscure this glory, that he hath brought multitudes of poor Christians to have

poor, low thoughts of the riches of his grace ; and to set every sin of theirs against it, which should but advance it ; and even to question the very foundation of the whole building, whether Christ hath redeemed the world by his sacrifice. Yea, he puts such a veil over the glory of the Gospel, that men can hardly be brought to receive it as glad tidings, till they first have assurance of their own sanctification ! And the very nature of God's kingdom is unknown, that some men think it to be unrighteousness, and libertinism, and others to be pensive dejections, and tormenting scruples and fears ; and but few know it to be righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. And the very business of a Christian's life and God's service, is rather taken to be scrupling, quarrelling, and vexing ourselves and the church of God, than to be love and gratitude, and a delighting our souls in God, and cheerfully obeying him. And thus when Christianity seems a thralldom and torment ; and the service of the world, the flesh, and the devil, seems the only freedom, and quiet, and delight, no wonder if the devil have more unfeigned servants than Christ ; and if men tremble at the name of holiness, and fly away from religion as a mischief. What can be more contrary to its nature, and to God's design in forming it, than for the professors to live such dejected and dolorous lives ? God calls men from vexation and vanity, to high delights and peace ; and men come to God as from peace and pleasure to vexation. All our preaching will do little to win souls from sensuality to holiness, while they look upon the sad lives of the professors of holiness ; as it will more deter a sick man from meddling with a physician, to see all he hath had in hand to lie languishing in continual pains to their death, than all his words and promises will encourage them. O what blessed lives might God's people live, if they understood the love of God in the mystery of man's redemption, and did addict themselves to the consideration and improvement of it, and did believingly eye the promised glory, and hereupon did make it the business of their lives to delight their souls in him that hath loved them ! And what a wonderful success might we expect to our preaching, if the holy delights and cheerful obedience of the saints did preach, as clearly to the eyes of the world, as we preach loudly to their ears.

But flesh will be flesh yet awhile ! And unbelief will be unbelief ! We are all to blame ! The Lord forgive our overlooking his lovingkindness ; and our dishonoring the glorious Gospel of his Son ; and our seconding Satan, in his contradicting of that design which hath contrived God's glory in so sweet a way.

And now, Christian reader, let me entreat thee in the name and fear of God, hereafter better to understand and practise thy duty. Thy heart is better a thousand times in godly sorrow than in carnal mirth, and by such sorrow it is often made better ; Eccles. vii. 2—4. But never take it to be right till it be delighting itself in God. When you kneel down in prayer, labor so to conceive of God, and bespeak him that he may be your delight ; so do in hearing and reading ; so do in all your meditations of God ; so do in your feasting on the flesh and blood of Christ at his supper. Especially improve the happy opportunity of the Lord's day, wherein you may wholly devote yourselves to this work. And I advise ministers and all Christ's redeemed ones, that they spend more of those days in praise and thanksgiving, especially in commemoration of the whole work of redemption (and not of Christ's resurrection alone) or else they will not answer the institution of the Lord. And that they keep it as the most solemn day of thanksgiving, and be briefer on that day in their confessions and lamentations, and larger at other times ! O that the congregations of Christ through the world were so well informed and animated that the main business of their solemn assemblies on that day might be to sound forth the high praises of their Redeemer ; and to begin here the praises of God and the Lamb, which they must perfect in heaven for ever ! How sweet a foretaste of heaven would be then in these solemnities ! And truly, let me tell you, my brethren of the ministry, you should by private teaching and week-day sermons, so further the knowledge of your people, that you might not need to spend so much of the Lord's day in sermons as the most godly use to do ; but might bestow a greater part of it in psalms and solemn praises to our Redeemer. And I could wish that the ministers of England, to that end, would unanimously agree on some one translation of the English Psalms in metre, better than that in common use, and if it may be, better than any yet extant (not neglect-

ing the poetical sweetness under pretence of exact translating,) or at least to agree on the best now extant ; (the London ministers may do well to lead the way) lest that blessed part of God's solemn worship should be blemished for want either of reformation or uniformity. And in my weak judgment, if hymns and psalms of praise were new invented, as fit for the state of the Gospel church and worship (to laud the Redeemer come in the flesh, as expressly as the work of grace is now express) as David's Psalms were fitted to the former state and infancy of the church, and more obscure revelations of the Mediator and his grace, it would be no sinful, human invention or addition ; nor any more want of warrant, than our inventing the form and words of every sermon that we preach, and every prayer that we make, or any catechism or confession of faith. Nay, it may seem of so great usefulness, as to be next to a necessity. (Still provided that we force not any to the use of them that through ignorance may scruple it.) And if there be any convenient parcels of the ancient church that are fitted to this use, they should deservedly be preferred. I do not think I digress all this while from the scope of my discourse. For doubtless if God's usual solemn worship on the Lord's days were more fitted and directed to a pleasant, delightful, praising way, it would do very much to frame the spirits of Christians to joyfulness, and thankfulness, and delight in God ; than which there is no greater cure for their doubtful, pensive, self-tormenting frame. O try this, Christians, at the request of one that is moved by God to importune you to it ! God doth pity you in your sorrows ! But he delighteth in you when you delight in him. See Isai. lviii. 14. compared with Zeph. iii. 17. And if sin interpose and hinder your delights, believe it, a cheerful amendment and obedience is that which will please God better than your self-tormenting fears. Do not you like that servant better that will go cheerfully about your work, and do it as well as he can, accounting it a recreation, and will endeavor to mend where he hath done amiss, than him that will at every step fall a crying, "O I am so weak, I can do nothing as I should ?" A humble sense of failings you will like ; but not that your servant should sit still and complain when he should be working ; nor that all your service should be performed with

weeping, disquietness and lamentations ; you had rather have your servant humbly and modestly cheerful, and not always dejected for fear of displeasing you. O how many poor souls are overseen in this ! You might easily perceive it even by the devil's opposition and temptations. He will further you in your self-vexations (when he cannot keep you in security and presumption,) but in amending, he will hinder you with all his might. How oft have I known poor, passionate creatures, that would vex and rage in anger, and break out in unseemly language, to the disquieting of all about them ; and others that would drop into other the like sins, and when they have done, lament it, and condemn themselves ; and yet would not set upon a resolute and cheerful reformation ! Nay, if you do but reprove them for any sin, they will sooner say, 'If I be so bad, God will condemn me for an hypocrite,' and so lie down in disquietness and distress ; than they will say, 'I see my sin, and I resolve to resist it, and I pray you warn me of it, and help me to watch against it.' So that they would bring us to this pass, that either we must let them alone with their sins, for fear of tormenting them, or else we must cause them to lie down in terrors. Alas, poor mistaken souls ! It is neither of these that God calls for ! Will you do any thing save what you should do ? Must you needs be esteemed either innocent, or hypocrites, or such as shall be damned ? The thing that God would have is this : That you would be glad that you see your fault, and thank him that sheweth it you, and resolvedly do your best to amend it, and this in faith and cheerful confidence in Christ, flying to his Spirit for help and victory. Will you please the devil so far, and so far contradict the gracious way of Christ, as that you will needs either sin still or despair ? Is there not a middle between these two, to wit, cheerful amendment ? Remember that it is not your vexation or despair, but your obedience and peace, that God desireth. That life is most pleasing to him, which is most safe and sweet to you.

If you say still, you cannot delight in God, I say again, Do but acknowledge it the great work that God requireth of you, and make it your daily aim, and care, and business, and then you will more easily and certainly attain it. But while you know not your work,

or so far mistake it, as to think it consisteth more in sorrows and fears; and never endeavor, in your duties or meditations, to raise your soul to a delight in God, but rather to cast down yourself with still poring on your miseries, no wonder then if you be a stranger to this life of holy delight.

(iii) By this time I find myself come up to the subject of my book of the "Saints' Rest;" wherein having said so much to direct and excite you, for the attainment of these spiritual and heavenly delights, I will refer you to it, for your help in that work; and add no more here, but to desire you, through the course of your life, to remember, That the true love of God in Christ, and delight in him, and thankful, cheerful obedience to him, is the great work of a Christian, which God is best pleased with, and which the blessed angels and saints shall be exercised in for ever.

vi And O thou the blessed God of love, the Father of mercy, the Prince of peace, the Spirit of consolation, compose the disquieted spirits of thy people, and the tumultuous, disjointed state of thy churches; and pardon our rashness, contentions, and blood-guiltiness, and give us not up to the state of the wicked, who are like the raging sea, and to whom there is no peace! Lay thy command on our winds and waves, before thy shipwrecked vessel perish; and rebuke that evil spirit whose name is Legion, which hath possessed so great a part of thine inheritance. Send forth the spirit of judgment and meekness into thy churches, and save us from our pride and ignorance with their effects; and bring our feet into the way of peace, which hitherto we have not known. O close all thy people speedily in loving consultations, and earnest inquiries after peace. Let them return from their corruptions, contentions, and divisions, and jointly seek thee, asking the way to Zion with their faces thitherward; saying, Come let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten. Blast all opposing policies and powers. Say to these dead and dry bones, Live. And out of these ruins do thou yet erect a city of righteousness, where thy people may dwell together in peaceable habitations; and in the midst thereof a temple to thy holiness: let the materials of it be verity and purity: let the Redeemer be its foundation: let love and peace cement it into unity: let thy laver

and covenant be the doors ; and holiness to the Lord be engraven thereon ; that buyers and sellers may be cast out, and the common and unclean may know their place ; and let no desolating abomination be there set up. But let thy people all in one name, in one faith, with one mind, and one soul, attend to thine instructions, and wait for thy laws, and submit unto thine order, and rejoice in thy salvation ; that the troubled spirits may be there exhilarated. the dark enlightened, and all may offer thee the sacrifice of praise, (without disaffections, discords, or divisions ;) that so thy people may be thy delight, and thou mayest be the chiefest delight of thy people ; and they may please thee through him that hath perfectly pleased thee. Or if our expectation of this happiness on earth be too high, yet give us so much as may enlighten our eyes, and heal those corruptions which estrange us from thee, and may propagate thy truth, increase thy church, and honor thy holiness, and may quicken our desires, and strengthen us in our way, and be a foretaste to us of the everlasting rest.



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**MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST
AND SALVATION,
TOO OFT THE ISSUE OF GOSPEL INVITATIONS:
MANIFESTED IN
A SERMON
PREACHED AT LAURENCE JURY IN LONDON.**

TO THE READER.

READER,

BEING called on in London to preach, when I had no time to study, I was fain to preach some sermons that I had preached in the country a little before. This was one, which I preached at St. Laurence, in the church where my reverend and faithful brother in Christ, Mr. Richard Vines, is pastor. When I came home I was followed by such importunities by letters to print the sermon, that I have yielded thereunto, though I know not fully the ground of their desires. Seeing it must abroad, will the Lord but bless it to the cure of thy contempt of Christ and grace, how comfortable may the occasion prove to thee and me ! It is the slighting of Christ and salvation, that undoes the world. O happy man if thou escape but this sin ! Thousands do split their souls on this rock which they should build them on. Look into the world, among rich and poor, high and low, young and old, and see whether it appear not by the whole scope of their conversations that they set more by something else than Christ ? And for all the proclamations of his grace in the Gospel, and our common professing ourselves to be his disciples, and to believe the glorious things that he hath promised us in another world, whether it yet appear not by the deceitfulness of our service, by our heartless endeavors to obtain his kingdom, and by our busy and delightful following of the world, that the most who are called Christians do yet in their hearts make light of Christ ; and if so, what wonder if they perish by their contempt ! Wilt thou but soberly peruse this short discourse, and consider well as thou readest of its truth and weight, till thy heart be sensible what a sin it is to make light of Christ and thy own salvation, and till the Lord that bought thee be advanced in the estimation and affections of thy soul, thou shalt hereby rejoice, and fulfil the desires of

Thy servant in the faith,

RICHARD BAXTER.

MAKING LIGHT OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW xxii. 5.

But they made light of it.

THE blessed Son of God, that thought it not enough to die for the world, but would himself also be the preacher of grace and salvation, doth comprise in this parable the sum of his Gospel. By the king that is here said to make the marriage, is meant God the Father, that sent his Son into the world to cleanse them from their sins, and espouse them to himself. By his Son, for whom the marriage is made, is meant the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who took to his godhead the nature of man, that he might be capable of being their Redeemer when they had lost themselves in sin. By the marriage is meant the conjunction of Christ to the soul of sinners, when he giveth up himself to them to be their Savior, and they give up themselves to him as his redeemed ones, to be saved and ruled by him ; the perfection of which marriage will be at the day of judgment, when the conjunction between the whole church and Christ shall be solemnized. The word here translated *marriage*, rather signifieth the marriage-feast ; and the meaning is, that the world is invited by the Gospel to come in and partake of Christ and salvation, which comprehendeth both pardon, justification, and right to salvation, and all other privileges of the members of Christ. The invitation is God's offer of Christ and salvation in the Gospel ; the servants that invite them are the preachers of the Gospel, who are sent forth by God to that end ; the preparation for the feast there mentioned, is the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and the enacting of a law of grace, and opening a way for revolting sinners to return to God. There is a mention of sending second messengers, because God useth not to take the first denial, but to exercise his patience till sinners are obstinate. The first persons invited are the Jews. Upon their obstinate refusal, they are sentenced

to punishment, and the Gentiles are invited ; and not only invited, but by powerful preaching, and miracles, and effectual grace, compelled ; that is infallibly prevailed with to come in. The number of them is so great that the house is filled with guests. Many come sincerely, not only looking at the pleasure of the feast, that is at the pardon of sin, and deliverance from the wrath of God, but also at the honor of the marriage, that is, of the Redeemer, and their profession by giving up themselves to a holy conversation. But some come in only for the feast, that is justification by Christ, having not the wedding garment of sound resolution for obedience in their life, and looking only at themselves in believing, and not to the glory of their Redeemer ; and these are sentenced to everlasting misery, and speed as ill as those that came not in at all ; seeing a faith that will not work is but like that of the devil, and they that look to be pardoned and saved by it are mistaken, as James sheweth, chap. ii. 24.

The words of my text contain a narration of the ill entertainment that the Gospel findeth with many to whom it is sent, even after a first and second invitation. They make light of it, and are taken up with other things. Though it be the Jews that were first guilty, they have too many followers among us Gentiles to this day.

Doct. 'For all the wonderful love and mercy that God hath manifested in giving his Son to be the Redeemer of the world, and which the Son hath manifested in redeeming them by his blood ; for all his full preparation by being a sufficient sacrifice for the sins of all ; for all his personal excellencies, and that full and glorious salvation that he hath procured ; and for all his free offers of these, and frequent and earnest invitation of sinners ; yet many do make light of all this, and prefer their worldly enjoyments before it. The ordinary entertainment of all is by contempt.'

Not that all do so, or that all continue to do so, who were once guilty of it : for God hath his chosen, whom he will compel to come in. But till the Spirit of grace overpower the dead and obstinate hearts of men, they hear the Gospel as a common story, and the great matters contained in it go not to the heart.

The method in which I shall handle this doctrine is this.

I. I shall shew you what it is that men make light of.

II. What this sin of making light of it is.

III. The cause of the sin.

IV. The use of the doctrine.

I. The thing that carnal hearers make light of is, 1. The doctrine of the Gospel itself, which they hear regardlessly. 2. The benefits offered them therein : which are, 1. Christ himself. 2. The benefits which he giveth.

1. Concerning Christ himself, the Gospel, (1.) Declareth his person and nature, and the great things that he hath done and suffered for man : his redeeming him from the wrath of God by his blood, and procuring a grant of salvation with himself. (2.) Furthermore, the same Gospel maketh an offer of Christ to sinners, that if they will accept him on his easy and reasonable terms, he will be their Savior, the physician of their souls, their husband, and their head.

2. The benefits that he offereth them are these. (1.) That with these blessed relations to him, himself and interest in him, they shall have the pardon of all their sins past, and be saved from God's wrath, and be set in a sure way of obtaining a pardon for all the sins that they shall commit hereafter, so they do but obey sincerely, and turn not again to the rebellion of their unregeneracy. (2.) They shall have the Spirit to become their guide and sanctifier, and to dwell in their souls, and help them against their enemies, and conform them more and more to his image, and heal their diseases, and bring them back to God. (3.) They shall have right to everlasting glory when this life is ended, and shall be raised up there-to at the last ; besides many excellent privileges in the way, in means, preservation, and provision, and the foretaste of what they shall enjoy hereafter. All these benefits the Gospel offereth to them that will have Christ on his reasonable terms. The sum of all is in 1 John v. 11, 12, " This is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son : he that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life."

II. What this sin of the making light of the Gospel is? 1. To make light of the Gospel is to take no great heed to what is spoken, as if it were not a certain truth, or else were a matter that little concerned them ; or as if God had not written these things for them. 2. When the Gospel doth not affect men, or go to their

him and all his benefits if they would, and they will not, unless they may keep the world too ; and are resolved to please their flesh, what ever comes of it ; this is a high contempt of Christ and everlasting life. (Matt. xiii. 21, 22 ; Luke xviii. 23.) You may find examples of such as I here describe.

5. When men will promise fair, and profess their willingness to have Christ on his terms, and to forsake all for him, but yet do stick to the world and their sinful courses ; and when it comes to practice, will not be removed by all that Christ hath done and said, this is making light of Christ and salvation. (Jer. xliii. 2.)

III. The causes of this sin are the next thing to be inquired after. It may seem a wonder that ever men, that have the use of their reason, should be so sottish as to make light of matters of such consequence. But the cause is,

1. Some men understand not the very sense of the words of the Gospel when they hear it, and how can they be taken with that which they understand not ? Though we speak to them in plain English, and study to speak it as plain as we can, yet people have so estranged themselves from God, and the matters of their own happiness, that they know not what we say, as if we spoke in another language, and as if they were under that judgment, Isa. xxviii. 11, " With stammering lips, and with another tongue will he speak to this people."

2. Some that do understand the words that we speak, yet because they are carnal, understand not the matter. For the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor. ii. 14.) They are earthly, and these things are heavenly. (John iii. 12.) These things of the Spirit are not well known by bare hearsay, but by spiritual taste, which none have but those that are taught by the Holy Ghost, (1 Cor. ii. 12,) that we may know the things that are given us of God.

3. A carnal mind apprehendeth not a suitableness in these spiritual and heavenly things to his mind, and therefore he sets light by them, and hath no mind of them. When you tell him of everlasting glory, he heareth you as if you were persuading him to go play with the sun : they are matters of another world, and out of

his element ; and therefore he hath no more delight in them than a fish would have to be in the fairest meadow, or than a swine hath in a jewel, or a dog in a piece of gold : They may be good to others but he cannot apprehend them as suitable to him, because he hath a nature that is otherwise inclined : he savoureth not the things of the Spirit. (Rom. viii. 5.)

4. The main cause of the slighting of Christ and salvation, is a secret root of unbelief in men's hearts. Whatsoever they may pretend, they do not soundly and thoroughly believe the word of God : They are taught in general to say the Gospel is true ; but they never saw the evidence of its truth so far, as thoroughly to persuade them of it ; nor have they got their souls settled on the infallibility of God's testimony, nor considered of the truth of the particular doctrines revealed in the Scripture, so far as soundly to believe them. O did you all but soundly believe the words of this Gospel, of the evil of sin, of the need of Christ, and what he hath done for you, and what you must be and do if ever you will be saved by him ; and what will become of you for ever if you do it not ; I dare say it would cure the contempt of Christ, and you would not make so light of the matters of your salvation. But men do not believe while they say they do, and would face us down that they do, and verily think that they do themselves. There is a root of bitterness, and an evil heart of unbelief, that makes them depart from the living God. (Heb. ii. 12 ; iv. 1, 2. 6.) Tell any man in this congregation that he shall have a gift of ten thousand pounds, if he will go to London for it ; if he believe you, he will go ; but if he believe not, he will not ; and if he will not go, you may be sure he believeth not, supposing that he is able. I know a slight belief may stand with a wicked life : such as men have of the truth of a prognostication, it may be true, and it may be false ; but a true and sound belief is not consistent with so great neglect of the things that are believed.

5. Christ and salvation are made light of by the world, because of their desperate hardness of heart. The heart is hard naturally, and by custom in sinning made more hard, especially by long abuse of mercy, and neglect of the means of grace, and resisting the Spirit of God. Hence it is that men are turned into such stones :

and till God cure them of the stone of the heart, no wonder if they feel not what they know, or regard not what we say, but make light of all ; it is hard preaching a stone into tears, or making a rock to tremble. You may stand over a dead body long enough, and say to it, ‘ O thou carcase, when thou hast lain rotting and mouldered to dust till the resurrection, God will then call thee to account for thy sin, and cast thee into everlasting fire,’ before you can make it feel what you say, or fear the misery that is never so truly threatened. When men’s hearts are like the highway that is trodden to hardness by long custom in sinning, or like the clay that is hardened to a stone by the heat of those mercies that should have melted them into repentance ; when they have consciences seared with a hot iron, as the apostle speaks, (1 Tim. iv. 2 ;) no wonder then if they be past feeling, and working all uncleanness with greediness do make light of Christ and everlasting glory. O that this were not the case of too many of our hearers ! Had we but *living souls* to speak to, they would hear, and feel, and not make light of what we say. I know they are naturally alive, but they are spiritually dead, as Scripture witnesseth. (Ephes. ii. 3.) O if there were but one spark of the life of grace in them, the doctrine of salvation by Jesus Christ would appear to them to be the weightiest business in the world ! O how confident should I be, methinks, to prevail with men, and to take them off this world, and bring them to mind the matters of another world, if I spake but to men that had life, and sense, and reason ! But when we speak to blocks and dead men, how should we be regarded ! O how sad a case are these souls in, that are fallen under this fearful judgment of spiritual madness and deadness ! To have a blind mind, and a hard heart, to be sottish and senseless, (Mark iv. 12 ; John xii. 40,) lest they should be converted, and their sin should be forgiven them !

6. Christ and salvation are made light of by the world, because they are wholly enslaved to their sense, and taken up with lower things : The matters of another world are out of sight, and so far from their senses, that they cannot regard them ; but present things are nearer them, in their eyes, and in their hands : There must be a living faith to prevail over sense, before men can be so taken with

22.) Men cannot serve two masters, God and mammon ; but they will lean to the one, and despise the other. (Matt. vi. 24.) He that loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (1 John ii. 15, 16.) Men cannot choose but set light by Christ and salvation, while they set so much by any thing on earth : It is that which is highly esteemed among men that is abominable in the sight of God. (Luke xvi. 15.) O this is the ruin of many thousand souls ! It would grieve the heart of any honest Christian to see how eagerly this vain world is followed every where, and how little men set by Christ, and the world to come : To compare the care that men have for the world, with the care of their souls ; and the time that they lay out on the world, with that time they lay out for their salvation : To see how the world fills their mouths, their hands, their houses, their hearts, and Christ hath little more than a bare title : To come into their company, and hear no discourse but of the world ; to come into their houses, and hear and see nothing but for the world, as if this world would last for ever, or would purchase them another. When I ask sometimes the ministers of the Gospel how their labors succeed, they tell me, ‘ People continue still the same, and give up themselves wholly to the world ; so that they mind not what ministers say to them, nor will give any full entertainment to the word, and all because of the deluding world :’ And O that too many ministers themselves did not make light of that Christ whom they preach, being drawn away with the love of this world ! In a word, men of a worldly disposition do judge of things according to worldly advantages, therefore Christ is slighted, “ He is despised and rejected of men, they hide their faces from him, and esteem him not, as seeing no beauty or comeliness in him, that they should desire him.” (Isa. liii. 3.)

7. Christ and salvation are made light of, because men do not soberly consider of the truth and weight of these necessary things. They suffer not their minds so long to dwell upon them, till they procure a due esteem, and deeply affect their heart ; did they believe them and not consider of them, how should they work ! O when men have reason given them to think and consider of the things that most concern them, and yet they will not use it, this causeth their contempt.

10. Christ and salvation are made light of, because of this disjunctive presumption ; either that he is sure enough theirs already, and God that is so merciful, and Christ that hath suffered so much for them, is surely resolved to save them, or else it may easily be obtained at any time, if it be not yet so. A conceited facility to have a part in Christ and salvation at any time doth occasion men to make light of them. It is true, that grace is free, and the offer is universal, according to the extent of the preaching of the Gospel ; and it is true, that men may have Christ when they will ; that is, when they are willing to have him on his terms ; but he that hath promised thee Christ if thou be willing, hath not promised to make thee willing : and if thou art not willing now, how canst thou think thou shalt be willing hereafter ? If thou canst make thine own heart willing, why is it not done now ? Can you do it better when sin hath more hardened it, and God may have given thee over to thyself ? O sinners ! you might do much, though you are not able of yourselves to come in, if you would now subject yourselves to the working of the Spirit, and set in while the gales of grace continue : But did you know what a hard and impossible thing it is to be so much as willing to have Christ and grace, when the heart is given over to itself, and the Spirit hath withdrawn its former invitations, you would not be so confident of your own strength to believe and repent ; nor would you make light of Christ upon such foolish confidence. If indeed it be so easy a matter as you imagine, for a sinner to believe and repent at any time, how comes it to pass that it is done by so few ; but most of the world do perish in their impenitency, when they have all the helps and means that we can afford them ? It is true, the thing is very reasonable and easy in itself to a pure nature ; but while man is blind and dead, these things are in a sort impossible to him, which are never so easy to others. It is the easiest and sweetest life in the world to a gracious soul to live in the love of God, and the delightful thoughts of the life to come, where all their hope and happiness lieth : but to a worldly, carnal heart it is as easy to remove a mountain as to bring them to this. However, these men are their own condemners : for if they think it so easy a matter to repent and believe, and so to have Christ, and right to salvation,

strange thing, nor must it too much discourage the preachers of the Gospel, if when they have said all that they can devise to say, to win the hearts of men to Christ, the most do still slight him, and while they bow the knee to him, and honor him with their lips, do yet set so light by him in their hearts, as to prefer every fleshly pleasure or commodity before him. It will be thus with many : let us be glad that it is not thus with all.

Use 3. But for closer application, seeing this is the great condemning sin, before we inquire after it in the hearts of our hearers, it beseems us to begin at home, and see that we who are preachers of the Gospel be not guilty of it ourselves. The Lord forbid that they that have undertaken the sacred office of revealing the excellencies of Christ to the world, should make light of him themselves, and slight that salvation which they do daily preach. The Lord knows we are all of us so low in our estimation of Christ, and do this great work so negligently, that we have cause to be ashamed of our best sermons ; but should this sin prevail in us, we were the most miserable of all men. Brethren, I love not censoriousness ; yet dare not befriend so vile a sin in myself or others, under pretence of avoiding it : especially when there is so great necessity that it should be healed first in them that make it their work to heal it in others. O that there were no cause to complain that Christ and salvation are made light of by the preachers of it ! But, 1. Do not the negligent studies of some speak it out ? 2. Doth not their dead and drowsy preaching declare it ? Do not they make light of the doctrine they preach, that do it as if they were half asleep, and feel not what they speak themselves ?

3. Doth not the carelessness of some men's private endeavors discover it ? What do they for souls ? how slightly do they reprove sin ? How little do they when they are out of the pulpit for the saving of men's souls !

4. Doth not the continued neglect of those things wherein the interest of Christ consisteth discover it ? 1. The church's purity and reformation. 2. Its unity.

5. Doth not the covetous and worldly lives of too many discover it, losing advantages for men's souls for a little gain to themselves ? And most of this is because men are preachers before they are

run for. Were it but possible for one of us to see the whole of this business, as the All-seeing God doth ; to see at one view both heaven and hell, which men are so near ; and see what most men in the world are minding, and what they are doing every day, it would be the saddest sight that could be imagined. O how should we marvel at their madness, and lament their self-delusion ! O poor distracted world ! what is it you run after ? and what is it that you neglect ? If God had never told them what they were sent into the world to do, or whither they were going, or what was before them in another world, then they had been excusable ; but he hath told them over and over, till they were weary of it. Had he left it doubtful there had been some excuse ; but it is his sealed word, and they profess to believe it, and would take it ill of us if we should question whether they do believe it or not.

Beloved, I come not to accuse any of you particularly of this crime ; but seeing it is the commonest cause of men's destruction, I suppose you will judge it the fittest matter for our inquiry, and deserving our greatest care for the cure. To which end I shall, i. Endeavor the conviction of the guilty. ii. Shall give them such considerations as may tend to humble and reform them. iii. I shall conclude with such direction as may help them that are willing to escape the destroying power of this sin. And for the first, consider,

i. It is the case of most sinners to think themselves freest from those sins that they are most enslaved to ; and one reason why we cannot reform them, is because we cannot convince them of their guilt. It is the nature of sin so far to blind and befool the sinner, that he knoweth not what he doth, but thinketh he is free from it when it reigneth in him, or when he is committing it : It bringeth men to be so much unacquainted with themselves, that they know not what they think, or what they mean and intend, nor what they love or hate, much less what they are habituated and disposed to. They are alive to sin, and dead to all the reason, consideration, and resolution that should recover them, as if it were only by their sinning that we must know they are alive. May I hope that you that hear me to-day are but willing to know the truth of your case, and then I shall be encouraged to proceed to an inquiry. God will

made it sure, or done your best to make it sure. Have you nobody to inquire of that might help you in such a work? Why you have ministers that are purposely appointed to that office. Have you gone to them, and told them the doubtfulness of your case, and asked their help in the judging of your condition? Alas, ministers may sit in their studies from one year to another, before ten persons among one thousand will come to them on such an errand! Do not these make light of Christ and salvation? When the Gospel pierceth the heart indeed, they cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do to be saved?" (Acts xvi. 30; ix. 6 :) Trembling and astonished, Paul cries out, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" And so did the convinced Jews to Peter. (Acts ii. 37.) But when hear we such questions?

4. The things that we value do deeply affect us, and some motions will be in the heart according to our estimation of them. O sirs, if men made not light of these things, what workings would there be in the hearts of all our hearers! What strange affections would it raise in them to hear of the matters of the world to come! How would their hearts melt before the power of the Gospel! What sorrow would be wrought in the discovery of their sins! What astonishment at the consideration of their misery! What unspeakable joy at the glad-tidings of salvation by the blood of Christ! What resolution would be raised in them upon the discovery of their duty! O what hearers should we have, if it were not for this sin! Whereas now we are more likely to weary them, or preach them asleep with matters of this unspeakable moment. We talk to them of Christ and salvation till we make their heads ache: little would one think by their careless carriage that they heard and regarded what we said, or thought we spoke at all to them.

5. Our estimation of things will be seen in the diligence of our endeavors. That which we most highly value, we shall think no pains too great to obtain. Do not those men then make light of Christ and salvation, that think all too much that they do for them; that murmur at his service, and think it too grievous for them to endure? That ask of his service as Judas of the ointment, 'What need this waste? Cannot men be saved without so much ado? This is more ado than needs.' For the world they will labor all

the day, and till their lives; but for Christ and salvation they are afraid of doing too much. Let us preach to them as long as we will, we cannot bring them to relish or resolve upon a life of holiness. Follow them to their houses, and you shall not hear them read a chapter, nor call upon God with their families once a day; nor will they allow him that one day in seven which he hath appointed to his service. But pleasure, or worldly business, or idleness, must have a part. And many of them are so far hardened as to reproach them that will not be so good as themselves. And is not Christ worth seeking? Is not everlasting salvation worth more than all this? Dost not that man make light of all these, that thinks his ease more worth than they? Let but common sense judge.

6. That which we most highly value, we think we cannot buy too dear: Christ and salvation are freely given, and yet the most will men go without them, because they cannot enjoy the world and them together. They are called but to part with that which would hinder them from Christ, and they will not do it. They are called but to give God his own, and to resign all to his will, and let go the profits and pleasures of this world, when they must let go either Christ or them, and they will not. They think this too dear a bargain, and say they cannot spare these things: they must hold their credit with men; they must look to their estates: How shall they live else? They must have their pleasure, whatsoever becomes of Christ and salvation: as if they could live without Christ better than without these: as if they were afraid of being losers by Christ, or could make a saving match by losing their souls to gain the world. Christ hath told us over and over, that if we will not forsake all for him we cannot be his disciples. (Matt. x.) Far are these men from forsaking all, and yet will needs think that they are his disciples indeed.

7. That which men highly esteem, they would help their friends to as well as themselves. Do not those men make light of Christ and salvation, that can take so much care to leave their children portions in the world, and do so little to help them to heaven? That provide outward necessities so carefully for their families, but do so little to the saving of their souls? Their neglected children

and friends will witness, that either Christ, or their children's souls, or both, were made light of.

8. That which men highly esteem, they will so diligently seek after, that you may see it in the success, if it be a matter within their reach. You may see how many make light of Christ, by the little knowledge they have of him, and the little communion with him, and communication from him ; and the little, yea, none of his special grace in them. Alas ! how many ministers can speak it to the sorrow of their hearts, that many of their people know almost nothing of Christ, though they hear of him daily ; nor know they what they must do to be saved. If we ask them an account of these things, they answer as if they understood not what we say to them, and tell us they are no scholars, and therefore think they are excusable for their ignorance. O if these men had not made light of Christ, and their salvation, but had bestowed but half so much pains to know and enjoy him, as they have done to understand the matters of their trades and callings in the world, they would not have been so ignorant as they are : They make light of these things, and therefore will not be at the pains to study or learn them. When men that can learn the hardest trade in a few years, have not learned a catechism, nor how to understand their creed, under twenty or thirty years' preaching, nor cannot abide to be questioned about such things ; doth not this shew that they have slighted them in their hearts ? How will these despisers of Christ and salvation be able one day to look him in the face, and to give an account of these neglects ?

ii. Thus much I have spoken in order to your conviction. Do not some of your consciences by this time smite you, and say, ' I am the man that have made light of my salvation ?' If they do not, it is because you make light of it still, for all that is said to you. But because, if it be the will of the Lord, I would fain have this damning distemper cured, and am loath to leave you in such a desperate condition, if I knew how to remedy it, I will give you some considerations, which may move you, if you be men of reason and understanding, to look better about you ; and I beseech you to weigh them, and make use of them as we go, and lay open your

would not have made light of him ; had you been one day in heaven, and but seen what they possess, and seen also what miserable souls must endure that are shut out, you would never sure have made so light of Christ again.

O sirs, it is no trifles or **jesting** matters that the Gospel speaks of. I must needs profess to **you**, that when I have the most serious thoughts of these things myself, I am ready to marvel that such amazing matters do not overwhelm the souls of men : that the greatness of the subject doth not so overmatch our understandings and affections, as even to drive men beside themselves, but that God hath always somewhat allayed it by the distance : much more that men should be so blockish as to make light of them. O Lord, that men did but know what everlasting glory and everlasting torments are. Would they then hear us as they do ? Would they read and think of these things as they do ? I profess I have been ready to wonder, when I have heard such weighty things delivered, how people can forbear crying out in the congregation ; much more how they can rest till they have gone to their ministers, and learned what they should do to be saved, that this great business might be put out of doubt. O that heaven and hell should work no more on men ! O that everlastingness should work no more ! O how can you forbear when you are alone to think with yourselves what it is to be everlastingly in joy or in torment ! I wonder that such thoughts do not break your sleep ; and that they come not in your mind when you are about your labor ! I wonder how you can almost do any thing else ! How you can have any quietness in your minds ! How you can eat, or drink, or rest, till you have got some ground of everlasting consolations ! Is that a man, or a corpse, that is not affected with matters of this moment ? that can be readier to sleep than to tremble when he heareth how he must stand at the bar of God ? Is that a man, or a clod of clay, that can rise and lie down without being deeply affected with his everlasting estate ? that can follow his worldly business, and make nothing of the great business of salvation or damnation ; and that when they know it is hard at hand ! Truly sirs, when I think of the weight of the matter, I wonder at the very best of God's saints upon earth that they are no better, and do no more in so weighty a case. I

believes not that ever Christ died, or rose again ; or doth not believe that there is a heaven or hell, this were no such marvel ; but for you that make it your creed, and your very religion, ae- call yourselves Christians, and have ~~been~~ baptized into this faith, and seemed to stand to it, this is ~~the wonder~~, and hath no excuse. What ! believe that you shall ~~live in~~ endless joy or torment, and yet make no more of it to escape torment, and obtain that joy ! What ! believe that God will shortly judge you ; and yet make no more preparation for it ! Either say plainly, ‘ I am no Christian, I do not believe these wonderful things, I will believe nothing but what I see ;’ or else let your hearts be affected with your belief, and live as you say you do believe. What do you think when you repeat the creed, and mention Christ’s judgment and everlasting life ?

7. What are these things you set so much by, as to prefer them before Christ and the saving of your souls ? Have you found a better friend, a greater and surer happiness than this ? Good Lord ! What dung is it that men make so much of, while they set so light by everlasting glory ! What toys are they that they are daily taken up with, while matters of life and death are neglected ! Why, sirs, if you had every one a kingdom in your hopes, what were it in comparison of the everlasting kingdom ? I cannot but but look upon all the glory and dignity of this world, lands and lordships, crowns and kingdoms, even as on some brain-sick, beggarly fellow, that borroweth fine clothes, and plays the part of a king or a lord for an hour on a stage, and then comes down, and the sport is ended, and they are beggars again. Were it not for God’s interest, ~~the~~ the authority of magistrates, or for the service they might ~~do~~ do, I should judge no better of them. For as to their own glory it is but a smoke : what matter is it whether you live poor or rich, unless it were a greater matter to die rich than it is ? You know well enough that death levels all : What matter is it at judgment, whether you be to answer for the life of a rich man or a poor man ? Is ~~Dives~~ Dives then any better than Lazarus ? O that men knew what a poor deceiving shadow they grasp at, while they let go the everlasting substance ! The strongest, and richest, and most voluptuous sinners, do but lay in fuel for their sorrows, while they think they are gathering together a treasure. Alas ! they are

asleep, and dream that they are happy ; but when they awake what a change will they find ? Their crown is made of thorns : their pleasure hath such a sting as will stick in the heart through all eternity, except unfeigned repentance do prevent it. O how sadly will these wretches be convinced ere long, what a foolish bargain they made in selling Christ and their salvation for these trifles ! Let your farms and merchandise then save you if they can ; and do that for you that Christ would have done. Cry then to thy Baal to save thee ! O what thoughts have drunkards and adulterers, &c. of Christ, that will not part with the basest lust for him ! " For a piece of bread," saith Solomon, " such men do transgress." (Prov. xxviii. 21.)

8. To set so light by Christ and salvation is a certain mark that thou hast no part in them, and, if thou so continue, that Christ will set us light by thee : " Those that honor him he will honor, and those that despise him shall be lightly esteemed," (1 Sam. ii. 30.) Thou wilt feel one day that thou canst not live without him. Thou wilt confess then thy need of him ; and then thou mayest go look for a Savior where thou wilt ; for he will be no Savior for thee hereafter, that wouldst not value him, and submit to him here : Then who will prove the loser by thy contempt ? O what a thing will it be for a poor miserable soul to cry to Christ for help in the day of extremity, and to hear so sad an answer as this ! Thou didst set light by me and my law in the day of thy prosperity, and I will now set as light by thee in thy adversity. (Read Prov. i. 24. to the end.) Thou that as Esau didst sell thy birthright for a mess of pottage, shalt then find no place for repentance, though thou seek it with tears. (Heb. xii. 17.) Do you think that Christ shed his blood to save them that continue to make light of it ? And to save them that value a cup of drink or a lust before his salvation ? I tell you, sirs, though you set light by Christ and salvation, God doth not so : he will not give them on such terms as these : he valueth the blood of his Son, and the everlasting glory ; and he will make you value them if ever you have them. Nay, this will be thy condemnation, and leaveth no remedy. All the world cannot save him that sets light by Christ. (Heb. ii. 3 ; Luke xiv. 24.) None of them shall taste of his supper. (Matt. x. 37.) Nor can

you blame him to deny you what you made light of yourselves. Can you find fault if you miss of the salvation which you slighted?

9. The time is near when Christ and salvation will not be made light of as now they are. When God hath shaken those careless souls out of their bodies, and you must answer for all your sins in your own name; O then what would you give for a Saviour! When a thousand bills shall be brought in against you, and none to relieve you; then you will consider, 'O! Christ would now have stood between me and the wrath of God: had I not despised him, he would have answered all.' When you see the world hath left you, and your companions in sin have deceived themselves and you, and all your merry days are gone; then what would you give for that Christ and salvation that now you account not worth your labor! Do you think, when you see the judgment set, and you are doomed to everlasting perdition for your wickedness, that you should then make as light of Christ as now? Why will you not judge now, as you know you shall judge then? Will he then be worth ten thousand worlds, and is he not now worth your highest estimation, and dearest affection?

10. God will not only deny thee that salvation thou madest light of, but he will take from thee all that which thou didst value before it. He that most highly esteems Christ shall have him, and the creatures so far as they are good here, and him without the creature hereafter, because the creature is not useful; and he that sets more by the creature than by Christ, shall have some of the creature without Christ here, and neither Christ nor it hereafter.

So much of these considerations, which may shew the true face of this heinous sin.

What think you now, friends, of this business? Do you not see by this time what a case that soul is in, that maketh light of Christ and salvation? What need then is there that you should take heed lest this should prove your own case! The Lord knows it is too common a case. Whoever is found guilty at the last of this sin, it were better for that man he had never been born. It were better for him he had been a Turk or Indian, that never had heard the name of a Savior, and that never had salvation offered to him. For such men "have no cloak for their sin." (John

will it prove on your side, if you force us to such an answer as this.

But if the Lord do move the hearts of any of you, and you resolve to make light of Christ no more : or if any of you say, ‘ We do not make light of him ;’ let me tell you here in the conclusion what you must do, or else you shall be judged as slights of Christ and salvation.

And first I will tell you what will not serve the turn.

1. You may have a notional knowledge of Christ, and the necessity of his blood, and of the excellency of salvation, and yet perish as neglecters of him. This is too common among professed Christians. You may say all that other men do of him. What Gospel passages had Balaam ! Jesus I know, and Paul I know, the very devils could say, who believe and tremble. (James ii.)

2. You may weep at the history of his passion, when you read how he was used by the Jews, and yet make light of him, and perish for so doing.

3. You may come desirously to his word and ordinances. Herod heard gladly ; so do many that yet must perish as neglecters of salvation.

4. You may in a fit of fear having strong desires after a Christ, to ease you, and to save you from God’s wrath, as Saul had of David to play before him ; and yet you may perish for making light of Christ.

5. You may obey him in many things so far as will not ruin you in the world, and escape much of the pollutions of the world by his knowledge, and yet neglect him.

6. You may suffer and lose much for him, so far as leaveth you an earthly felicity : as Ananias, the young man. Some parcels of their pleasures and profits many will part with in hope of salvation, that shall perish everlastingly for valuing it no more.

7. You may be esteemed by others a man zealous for Christ, and loved and admired upon that account, and yet be one that shall perish for making light of him.

8. You may verily think yourselves, that you set more by Christ and salvation than any thing, and yet be mistaken, and be judged as contemners of him : Christ justifieth not all that justify themselves.

9. You may be zealous preachers of Christ and salvation, and reprove others for this neglect, and lament the sin of the world in the like expression as I have done this day; and yet if you or I have no better evidence to prove our hearty esteem of Christ and salvation, we are undone for all this.

You hear, brethren, what will not serve the turn; will you now hear what persons, you must be if you would not be condemned as slights of Christ? O search whether it be thus with your souls, or no.

1. Your esteem of Christ and salvation must be greater than your esteem of all the honors, profits, or pleasures of this world, or else you slight him: no less will be accounted sincere, nor accepted to your salvation: Think not this hard, when there is no comparison in the matters esteemed. To esteem the greatest glory on earth before Christ and everlasting glory, is a greater folly and wrong to Christ, than to esteem a dog before your prince, would be folly in you, and a wrong to him. Scripture is plain in this; "**He that loveth father or mother, wife, children, home, land, or his own life, more than me, is not worthy of me, and cannot be my disciple.**" (Matt. x. 37; Luke xiv. 26.)

2. You must manifest this esteem of Christ and salvation in your daily endeavors and seeking after him, and in parting with any thing that he shall require of you. God is a Spirit, and will not take a hypocritical profession instead of the heart and spiritual service which he commandeth. He will have the heart or nothing; and the chief room in the heart too: These must be had.

If you say that you do not make light of Christ, or will not hereafter; let me try you in these few particulars, whether indeed you mean as you say, and do not dissemble.

1. Will you for the time to come make Christ and salvation the chiefest matter of your care and study? Thrust them not out of your thoughts as a needless or unprofitable subject; nor allow it only some running, slight thoughts, which will not affect you. But will you make it your business once a day to bethink you soberly, when you are alone, what Christ hath done for you, and what he will do, if you do not make light of it; and what it is to be everlastingly happy or miserable; and what all things in this world are

in comparison of your salvation ; and how they will shortly leave you ; and what mind you will be then of, and how you will esteem them ? Will you promise me now and then to make it your business to withdraw yourselves from the world, and set yourselves to such considerations as these ? If you will not, are not you slights of Christ and salvation, that will not be persuaded soberly to think on them ? This is my first question to put you to the trial, whether you will value Christ, or not.

2. Will you for the time to come set more by the word of God, which contains the discovery of these excellent things, and is your charter for salvation, and your guide thereunto ? You cannot set by Christ, but you must set by his word : therefore the despisers of it are threatened with destruction. (Prov. xiii. 13.) Will you therefore attend to the public preaching of this word ? Will you read it daily ? Will you resolve to obey it whatever it may cost you ? If you will not do this, but make light of the word of God, you shall be judged as such as make light of Christ and salvation, whatever you may fondly promise to yourselves.

3. Will you for the time to come, esteem more of the officers of Christ, whom he hath purposely appointed to guide you to salvation ; and will you make use of them for that end ? Alas, it is not to give the minister a good word, and speak well of him, and pay him his tithes duly, that will serve the turn : it is for the necessity of your souls that God hath set them in his church ; that they may be as physicians under Christ, or his apothecaries to apply his remedies to your spiritual diseases, not only in public, but also in private : that you may have some to go to for the resolving of your doubts, and for your instruction where you are ignorant, and for the help of their exhortations and prayers. Will you use hereafter to go to your ministers privately, and solicit them for advice ? And if you have not such of your own as are fit, get advice from others ; and ask them, What you shall do to be saved ? How to prepare for death and judgment ? And will you obey the word of God in their mouths : If you will not do this much, nor so much as inquire of those that should teach you, nor use the means which Christ hath established in his church for your help, your own consciences shall one day witness that you were such as made light of

Christ and salvation. If any of you doubt whether it be your duty thus to ask counsel of your teachers, as sick men do of their physicians, let your own necessities resolve you, let God's express word resolve you; see what is said of the priests of the Lord, even before Christ's coming, when much of their work did lie in ceremonies! "My covenant was with him of life and peace: and I gave them to him (to Levi) for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. For the priests' lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of Hosts." (Mal. ii. 5, 6.)

Nay, you must not only inquire, and submit to their advice, but also to their just reprehensions, and church censures: and without proud repining submit to the discipline of Christ in their hands, if it shall be used in the congregations whereof you are members.

4. Will you for the time to come, make conscience of daily and earnest prayer to God, that you may have a part in Christ and salvation? Do not go out of doors till you have breathed out these desires to God; do not lie down to rest till you have breathed out these desires; say not, God knoweth my necessity without so often praying; for though he do, yet he will have you to know them, and feel them, and exercise your desires and all the graces of his Spirit in these duties: it is he that hath commanded to pray continually, though he know your needs without. (1 Thess. v. 17.) Christ himself spent whole nights in prayer, and encourageth us to this course. (Luke xviii. 1.) If you will not be persuaded to this much, how can you say that you make not light of Christ and salvation?

5. Will you for the time to come resolutely cast away your known sins at the command of Christ? If you have been proud, or contentious, or malicious, and revengeful, be so no more. If you have been adulterers, or swearers, or cursers, be so no more. You cannot hold these, and yet set by Christ and salvation.

What say you? Are you resolved to let them go? If not, when you know it is the will of Christ, and he hath told you such shall not enter into his kingdom, do not you make light of him?

6. Will you for the time to come serve God in the dearest as well as in the cheapest part of his service? Not only with your tongues, but with your purses and your deeds? Shall the poor find that you set more by Christ than this world? Shall it appear in any good uses that God calls you to be liberal in, according to your abilities? Pure religion, and undefiled before God, is this, To visit the fatherless and the widows, in their affliction. (James i. ult.) Will you resolve to stick to Christ, and make sure this work of salvation, though it cost you all that you have in the world? If you think these terms too dear, you make light of Christ, and will be judged accordingly.

7. Will you for the time to come make much of all things that tend to your salvation; and take every help that God offereth you, and gladly make use of all his ordinances? Attend upon his strengthening sacraments, spend the Lord's own day in these holy employments; instruct your children and servants in these things; (Deut. vi. 6. 7; get into good company that set their faces heavenward, and will teach you the way, and help you thither: and take heed of the company of wicked scorers, or foolish, voluptuous fleshly men, or any that would hinder you in this work. Will you do these things? Or will you shew that you are slights of Christ by neglecting them?

8. Will you do all this with delight; not as your toil, but as your pleasure; and take it for your highest honor that you may be Christ's disciples, and may be admitted to serve and worship him; and rejoice with holy confidence in the sufficiency of that sacrifice by which you may have pardon of all your failings, and right to the inheritance of the saints in light? If you will do these things sincerely, you will shew that you set by Christ and salvation; else not.

Dearly beloved in the Lord, I have now done that work which I came upon; what effect it hath, or will have upon your hearts, I know not, nor is it any further in my power to accomplish that which my soul desireth for you. Were it the Lord's will that I might have my wish herein, the words that you have this day heard should so stick by you, that the secure should be awakened by them, and none of you should perish by the slighting of your sal-

vation. I cannot now follow you to your several habitations to apply this word to your particular necessities: but O that I could make every man's conscience a preacher to himself, that it might do it, which is ever with you: that the next time you go prayerless to bed, or about your business, conscience might cry out, 'Dost thou set no more by Christ and thy salvation?' That the next time you are tempted to think hardly of a holy and diligent life, (I will not say to deride it as more ado than needs,) conscience might cry out to thee, 'Dost thou set so light by Christ and thy salvation?' That the next time you are ready to rush upon known sin, and to please your fleshly desires against the command of God, conscience might cry out, 'Is Christ and salvation no more worth, than to cast them away, or venture them for thy lusts?' That when you are following the world with your most eager desires, forgetting the world to come, and the change that is a little before you, conscience might cry out to you, 'Is Christ and salvation no more worth than so?' That when you are next spending the Lord's-day in idleness or vain sports, conscience might tell you what you are doing. In a word, that in all your neglects of duty, your sticking at the supposed labor or cost of a godly life; yea, in all your cold and lazy prayers and performances, conscience might tell you how unsuitable such endeavors are to the reward; and that Christ and salvation should not be so slighted. I will say no more but this at this time, It is a thousand pities that when God hath provided a Savior for the world, and when Christ hath suffered so much for their sins, and made so full a satisfaction to justice, and purchased so glorious a kingdom for his saints, and all this is offered so freely to sinners, to lost unworthy sinners, even for nothing, that yet so many millions should everlastingly perish because they made light of their Savior and salvation, and prefer the vain world and their lusts before them. I have delivered my message, the Lord open your hearts to receive it; I have persuaded you with the word of truth and soberness, the Lord persuade you more effectually, or else all this is lost.

SOME IMITABLE PASSAGES

OF THE

Life of Elizabeth, late wife of Mr. Joseph Baker.

[An Appendix to the Sermon preached at her funeral.]

THOUGH I spoke so little as was next to nothing of our dear deceased friend, it was not because I wanted matter, or thought it unmeet; but I use it but seldom, lest I raise expectations of the like, where I cannot conscionably perform it. But he that hath promised to honor those that serve and honor him, (John xii. 26; 1 Sam. ii. 30,) and will come at last “to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe,” (2 Thess. i. 10,) I know will take it as a great and acceptable act of service, to proclaim the honor of his grace, and to give his servants their due on earth, whose souls are glorified with Christ in heaven, though serpentine enmity will repine, and play the envious accuser.

It is not the history of the life of this precious servant of the Lord which I intend to give you, (for I was not many years acquainted with her,) but only some passages, which, either upon my certain knowledge, or her own diurnal of her course, or the most credible testimony of her most intimate, judicious, godly friends, I may boldly publish as true and imitable in this untoward, distempered generation.

She was born November, 1634, in Southwark, near London, the only child of Mr. John Godeschalk, *alias* Godscall. Her father dying in her childhood, she was left an orphan to the Chamber of London. Her mother after married Mr. Isaac Barton, with whom she had the benefit of religious education: but betwixt sixteen and seventeen years of age, by the serious reading of the book called “The Saints’ Everlasting Rest,” she was more thoroughly awakened, and brought to set her heart on God, and to seek salvation

with her chiefest care. From that time forward she was more constant, diligent, serious hearer of the ablest ministers in London, rising early, and going far to hear them on the week days; waiting on God for his confirming grace in the use of those ordinances, which empty, unexperienced hypocrites are easily tempted to despise. The sermons, which she constantly wrote, she diligently repeated at home, for the benefit of others; and every week read over some of those that she had heard long before, that the fruit of them might be retained and renewed; it being not novelty that she minded.

In the year 1654, being near one-and-twenty years of age, after seeking God and waiting for his resolving, satisfying directions, she consented to be joined in marriage to Mr. Joseph Baker, by the approbation of her nearest friends, God having taken away her mother the year before. With him she approved herself, indeed, such a wife as Paul (no papist) describeth as meet for a bishop or pastor of the church; "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things." (1 Tim. iii. 11.) Some instances I shall give for the imitation of others.

1. She was very exemplary in self-denial and humility: and having said thus much, what abundance have I comprehended! Ob, what a beauty doth self-denial and humility put on souls! Nay, what a treasure of everlasting consequence doth these two words express! I shall give you a few of the discoveries.

1. It appeared in her accompanying in London with the holiest, how mean soever, avoiding them that were proud, and vain, and carnal. She desired most to be acquainted with those that she perceived were best acquainted with God, neglecting the pomp and vain-glory of the world.

2. When she was called to a married state, though her portion, and other advantages, invited persons of greater estates in the world, she chose rather to marry a minister of known integrity, that might be a near and constant guide, stay, and comfort to her in the matters which she valued more than riches. And she missed not of her expectations for the few years that she lived with him. Even in this age, when the serpent is hissing in every corner at faithful ministers, and they are contemned both by profane and

heretical malignants, she preferred a mean life with such a one, for her spiritual safety and solace, before the grandeur of the world.

3. When some inhabitants of the city of Worcester were earnest with me to help them to an able minister, Mr. Baker, then living in Kent, had about a hundred pounds per annum: and when, at my motion, he was readily willing to take a great charge in Worcester, upon a promise from two men to make the maintenance fifty pounds a year, by a voluntary contribution, of the continuance of which he had no security, his wife was the promoter, and no discourager, of his self-denial, and never tempted him to look after greater things. And afterward, when I was afraid lest the smallness and uncertainty of the means, together with his discouragements from some of his people, might have occasioned his remove, and have heard of richer places mentioned to him, as he still answered that he had enough, and minded not removing without necessity, so was she ever of the same mind, and still seconded and confirmed him in such resolutions, even to follow God's work while they had a competency of their own, and to mind no more.

4. Her very speech and behavior did so manifest meekness and humility, that, in a little converse with her, it might easily be discerned.

5. She thought nothing too mean for her that belonged to her in her family and relation, no employment, food, &c., saying often, that 'What God had made her duty was not too low a work for her.' And, indeed, when we know once that it is a work that God sets us upon, it signifieth much forgetfulness of him and ourselves, if we think it too base, or think ourselves too good to stoop to it.

6. No neighbor did seem too mean or poor for her familiar converse, if they were but willing.

7. She had a true esteem and cheerful love for the meanest of her husband's relations, and much rejoiced in her comfort in his kindred, recording it among her experienced mercies.

II. She was very constant and diligent in doing her part of family duties; teaching all the inferiors of her family, and laboring to season them with principles of holiness, and admonishing them of their sin and danger: never failing, on the Lord's day at night, to

bear them read the Scriptures and recite their catechisms, when public duty, and all other family duty, was ended, and, in her husband's absence, praying with them. How much the imitation of such examples would conduce to the sanctifying of families is easy to be apprehended.

III. In secret duty she was very constant, and lived much in those two great soul-advancing works, meditation and prayer, in which she would not admit of interruptions. This inward, holy diligence was it that maintained spiritual life within, which is the spring of outward acceptable works. When communion with God, and daily labor upon our own hearts, is laid aside, or negligently and remissly followed, grace languisheth first within, and then unfruitfulness, if not disorders and scandals, appear without.

IV. Her love to the Lord Jesus was evidenced by her great affection to his ordinances, and ways, and servants. A very hearty love she manifested to those on whom the image of God did appear, even the poorest and meanest, as well as the rich or eminent in the world. Nor did a difference in lesser matters, or any tolerable mistakes, alienate her affections from them.

V. She was a Christian of much plainness, simplicity, and singleness of heart; far from a subtle, crafty, dissembling frame, and also from loquacity, or ostentation. And the world was very low in her eyes, to which she was long crucified, and on which she looked as a lifeless thing. Sensuality, and pampering the flesh, she much loathed. When she was invited to feasts she would oft complain that they occasioned a difficulty in maintaining a sense of the presence of God, whose company in all her company she preferred.

VI. She was a very careful esteemer and redeemer of her time. At home in her family the works of her general and particular calling took her up. When necessary business, and greater duties, gave way, she was seldom without a book in her hand, or some edifying discourse in her mouth, if there were opportunity. And abroad she was very weary of barren company, that spent the time in common chat, and dry discourses.

VII. She used good company practically and profitably, making use of what she heard for her own spiritual advantage. When I

understood, out of her diary, that she wrote down some of my familiar discourses, with serious application to herself, it struck exceedingly deep to my heart, how much I have sinned all my days, since I undertook the person of a minister of Christ, by the slightness and unprofitableness of my discourse ; and how careful ministers should be of their words, and how deliberately, wisely, and seriously they should speak about the things of God, and how diligently they should take all fit opportunities to that end, when we know not how silent hearers are affected with what we say. For aught we know, there may be some that will write down what we say in their books, or hearts, or both. And God and conscience write down all.

VIII. In her course of reading she was still laying in for use and practice. Her course was, when she read the Scriptures, to gather out passages, and sort and refer them to their several uses, as some that were fit subjects for her meditations, some for encouragement to prayer and other duties, promises suited to various conditions and wants ; as her papers show.

And for other books, she would meddle with none but the sound and practical, and had no itch after the empty books, which make ostentation of novelty, and which opinionists are now so taken with ; nor did she like writing or preaching in envy and strife. And of good books she chose to read but few, and those very often over, that all might be well digested. Which is a course (for private Christians) that tends to avoid luxuriancy, and make them sincere, and solid, and established.

IX. She had the great blessing of a tender conscience. She did not slightly pass over small sins without penitent observation. Her diary records her trouble when causelessly she had neglected any ordinance ; or was hindered by rain, or small occasions : or if she had overslept herself, and lost a morning exercise in London, or came too late ; or if she were distracted in secret duty. And if she missed of a fast through misinformation and disappointments, and found not her heart duly sensible of the loss ; that also she recorded. So did she her stirrings of anger, and her very angry looks, resolving to take more heed against them. Though all

ought not to spend so much time in writing down their failings, yet all should watch and renew repentance.

X. She was very solicitous for the souls of her friends. As, for instance, her brothers-in-law, over whom she exercised a motherly care, instructing them, and watching over them, and telling them of miscarriages, and counselling them: causing them to keep a constant course of reading the holy Scriptures, and meditating on it (as far as she could :) causing them to learn many chapters without book, and to read other good books in season; earnestly praying for them in particular; much desiring one or both should be ministers: and when her father-in-law appointed the eldest to go to France, she was much troubled for fear of his miscarriage among strangers, especially those of the Romish way.

XI. She was a serious mourner for the sins of the time and place she lived in.

XII. In sum, for strict, close, watchful, holy walking with God, even her husband professeth that she was a pattern to him. As I hinted before, she kept a daily account in writing (which is now to be seen, from the beginning of the year 1654,) especially of these particulars:

1. Of the frame of her heart in every day's duty; in meditation, prayer, hearing, reading, &c., whether lively or dull, &c.

2. Of those sins which she had especially to repent of, and watch against.

3. Of her resolutions and promises, and how she kept them.

4. Of all special providences to herself, husband, brothers, and others, and the improvement of them. As at the death of her son, who died with great sighs and groans, she recorded her sense of the special necessity of holy armor, and great preparation, for that encounter, when her turn should come to be so removed to the everlasting habitation.

5. Of her returns of prayer, what answers, and grant of them she found.

6. Of the state of her soul upon examination; how she found it, and what was the issue of her examination; and in this it seems she was very exact and punctual. In which, though many times fears and doubtings did arise, yet hath she frequent records of the

discovery of evidences, and comfortable assurance of sincerity. Sometimes when she hath heard sermons in London, that helped her in her search, and sometimes when she had been reading writings that tended that way, she recorded what evidences she found, and in what degree the discovery was; if imperfect, resolving to take it up, and follow the search further. And if she had much joy, she received it with jealousy, and expectation of some humbling consequent. When any grace languished, she presently turned to some apt remedy. As, for instance, it is one of her notes, November, 1658, 'I found thoughts of eternity slight and strange, and ordinary employments very desirable; at which I read Mr. B.'s Crucifixion, and was awakened to mortification and humiliation,' &c.

The last time that she had opportunity for this work, was two or three days before her delivery in childbearing, where she finally recorded the apprehensions she had, both of her bodily and spiritual state, in these words, 'Drawing near the time of my delivery, I am fallen into such weakness that my life is in hazard. I find some fears of death, but not very great, hoping, through grace, I die in the Lord.' I only mention these hints to show the method she used in her daily accounts. To those Christians that have full leisure, this course is good; but I urge it not upon all. Those that have so great duties to take up that time, that they cannot spare so much to record their ordinary passages, such must remember what others record, and daily renew repentance for their daily failings, and record only the extraordinary, observable, and more remarkable and memorable passages of their lives, lest they lose time for works of greater moment. But this excellent work of watchfulness must be performed by all.

And I think it was a considerable expression of her true wisdom, and care of her immortal soul, that when any extraordinary necessity required it, and she found such doubts, as of herself she was not able to deal with, she would go to some able, experienced minister to open her case, and seek assistance, (as she did, more than once, to my dear and ancient friend, Mr. Cross, who, in full age, is since gone after her to Christ,) and, therefore, chose a

minister in marriage, that he might be a ready assistant in such cases of necessity, as well as a continual help.

At last came that death to summon her soul away to Christ, for which she had so seriously been preparing, and which she oft called a 'dark entry to her Father's palace.' After the death of her children, when she seemed to be somewhat repaired, after her last delivery, a violent convulsion suddenly surprised her, which, in a few days, brought her to her end. Her understanding, by the fit, being at last debilitated, she finding it somewhat hard to speak sensibly, excused it, and said, 'I shall, ere long speak another language,' which were the last words which she spake with the tongue of flesh, and laying speechless eighteen hours after, she departed, Aug. 17, 1659. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Rev. xiv. 13.)

Our turn is coming. Shortly we shall also lay by the flesh. This is our day of preparation; there is no preparing time but this. Did men but know the difference between the death of the holy and the unholy, which doth not appear to fleshly eyes, how speedily would they turn! how seriously would they meditate! how fervently would they pray! how carefully would they live! how constantly, painfully, and resolvedly would they labor! Did they well consider the difference between dying prepared and unprepared, and of what difficulty, and yet everlasting consequence, it is to die well; oh! then, what manner of persons would men be, in all manner of holy conversation and godliness, and all their lives would then be a continued preparation for death, as all their lives are hastening towards it.

And now I shall only desire you, for the right understanding of all that I have here said, and to prevent the cavils of blinded malice, to observe these three or four particulars.

1. That though I knew so much of her as easily maketh me believe the rest, upon so sure a testimony, and saw her diary, yet the most of this history of her life is the collection and observation of such faithful witnesses as had much better opportunity than I to know the secrets of her soul and life.

2. That it is no wonder if many, that knew her, perceived not

all this by her that is here expressed ; for that knowledge of our outward carriage at a distance will not tell our neighbors what we do in our closets, where God hath commanded us to shut our door upon us, that our Father which seeth in secret, may reward us openly. And many of the most humble and sincere servants of the Lord are so afraid of hypocrisy, and hate ostentation, that their justification and glory is only to be expected from the Searcher of hearts, and a few of their more intimate acquaintance ; though this was not the case before us, the example described being more conspicuous.

3. That I over-passed the large expressions of her charity, which you may hear from the poor, and her intimate acquaintance, as I have done ; that I may not grate upon the modesty of her surviving friends, who must participate in the commendations.

4. That it is the benefit of the living that is my principal end. Scripture itself is written much in history, that we may have matter of imitation before our eyes.

5. If any say that here is no mention of her faults, I answer, Though I had acquaintance with her, I knew them not, nor ever heard from any other so much as might enable me to accuse her, if I were her enemy. Yet I doubt not but she was imperfect, and had faults, though unknown to me. The example of holiness I have briefly proposed. They that would see examples of iniquity, may look abroad in the world, and find enough ; I need not be the accuser of the saints to furnish them. And I think if they inquire here of any thing notable, they will be hard put to it to find enough to cover the accuser's shame.

6. It is the honor of Christ, and grace in his members, more than the honor of his servants, that I seek.

7. And I would not speak that in commendation of the living which I do of the dead, who are out of the reach of all temptations of being lifted up with pride thereby ; unless it be such whose reputation the interest of Christ and the gospel commandeth me to vindicate.

8. Lastly, I am so far from lifting up one above the rest of the members of Christ by these commendations, and from abasing others, whose names I mention not, that I intend the honor of all in

one, and think that in the substance I describe all saints in describing one. I am not about a popish work, of making a wonder of a saint, as of a phoenix, or some rare, unusual thing. Saints with them must be canonized, and their names put in the calendar; and yet their blind malice tells the world that there are no such things as saints among us. But I rejoice in the many that I have communion with, and the many that have lately stepped before me into heaven, and are safe there, out of the reach of malice, and of sin, and all the enemies of their peace; and have left me mourning, and yet rejoicing; fearing, and yet hoping; and, with some desires, looking after them here behind: and the faster Christ calls away his chosen ones, whose graces were amiable in mine eyes, the more willing he maketh me to follow them, and to leave this world of darkness, confusion, wickedness, danger, vanity, and vexation, and to meet these precious souls in life, where we shall rejoice that we are past this howling wilderness, and shall for ever be with the Lord.

FROM BAXTER'S POETICAL FRAGMENTS.

“As for my friends, they are not lost:
 The several vessels of thy fleet,
 Though parted now by tempests tost,
 Shall safely in the haven meet.
 Still we are centered all in Thee;
 Members, tho’ distant of one head,
 In the same family we be,
 By the same faith and Spirit led.
 Before thy throne we daily meet,
 As joint petitioners to Thee;
 In spirit we each other greet,
 And shall again each other see.
 The heavenly hosts, world without end,
 Shall be my company above;
 And thou, my best, my surest Friend,
 Who shall divide me from thy love?”





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